

**DEWAN RAMCOMUL SEN
AND
HIS TIMES**

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To
Mā and Sonādidi

PREFACE

Dewan Ramkamal Sen (1783-1844) was generally regarded as a conservative Hindu of the early nineteenth century Bengal. He was considered conservative because he could not share the views either of Raja Rammohan Ray or of the missionaries and the Government on the *Sati* question. He was a member of the Dharma Sabha, a body which fought against Sati Regulation passed by Lord William Bentinck. The Derozians took him to task just because he sided with Radhakanta Deb and Prasanna Kumar Tagore on the issue of dismissal of Derozio from the Hindu College, Calcutta. On these two counts, he has been branded not only a conservative Hindu but also a reactionary. In the main, much emphasis has been laid on these two episodes of Ramkamal's public life though it is universally admitted that in the last analysis, human life cannot but be a combination of light and shade. Overemphasis on any of these two aspects is likely to mar our vision and a pre-conceived notion may stealthily creep in to cast its shadow over our judgment. The historians of the nineteenth century have either taken no interest in him or have picked up certain issues to decide his role in the contemporary social scene. Ramkamal has been depicted as a symbol of conservatism and reaction of the period. This perception of the man has diverted general attention from his positive and progressive contributions towards the regeneration of contemporary society. It is undeniable that Ramkamal was a controversial personality of his times. His role in the contemporary society therefore, demands fresh assessment in the light of the documents, now available to us.

Since the last decade of the eighteenth century, the British officials and the missionaries were trying to establish new institutions to bring about changes in Indian society. The Asiatic Society, the School Book Society, the Hindu College, the Sanskrit College, the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India, the Medical College, the District Charitable Society et al. were established either at their initiative or with their active patronage and support. Bank of Bengal, a kind of State Bank, came to be established with the active support of the Government in 1806.

Ramkamal began his career as a writer in the Asiatic Society and subsequently rose to occupy the position of the Dewan of the Bank of Bengal. He was actively associated with almost every important institution of the period. His role in different institutions has been critically discussed in the book.

In writing the book no specific conceptual framework has been adopted. Instead, an attempt has been made to place before the

readers almost all the facts available about the man. Readers of this book can form their own views about the man from the facts presented. In our estimate Ramkamal Sen appears to be as good a modernizer as Raja Rammohan Ray.

I had the fortune to enjoy the affection of late Prof. Narendra Krishna Sinha and late Prof. Satyendranath Sen. They always helped and encouraged me in my studies. Their memories are still fresh in my mind. My debt to them is immense.

I am greatly indebted to Prof. Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay and Prof. Santosh Kumar Bhattacharyya, who have very kindly gone through my manuscript and favoured me with valuable suggestions. They have always been very kind to me. My teacher, Prof. Suprakash Sanyal, has not only suggested the topic but has also taken keen interest in the progress of my work. Without his kind help and encouragement, I could not have finished my work and published this book. Prof. Pradip Sinha has the kindness to see my manuscript. His advice has been found extremely valuable. Prof. Ujjal Kumar Majumder has taken much interest in this publication. His suggestions on some chapters have been of great value to me. Prof. Dilip Biswas, Prof. Nirmalya Bagchi, Prof. Anil Sarkar (my cousin) and Prof. Narendranath Das Gupta have very kindly helped me with some valuable books and references.

Dr. Bringle and Mrs. Prativa Biswas of India Office Library and Records, have very kindly supplied me with xerox copies of all the letters written by Ramkamal Sen to Dr. H. H. Wilson. I shall never forget their kindness and generosity.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance I have received from the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi for the publication of this book.

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11th March, 1990.

Pradyot Kumar Ray

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INTRODUCTION

Bengal in the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a large number of luminaries and new institutions as a result of which there was an unprecedented development in the cultural field. It has become customary to compare nineteenth century Calcutta, the seat of this cultural efflorescence, with Athens of Ancient Greece and sometimes with Florence, the Italian town, of the fifteenth century. To describe the multirarious cultural activities of nineteenth century Bengal, led by Calcutta, the historians were tempted to coin and use the term Bengal Renaissance. It cannot be maintained that an Italian type Renaissance took place in nineteenth century Bengal. But it is beyond doubt that in the nineteenth century a vigorous awakening took place in the Bengal region of India and Rammohan Ray is generally described as the harbinger of these changes.

This book is an account of the life-story of a Calcutta intellectual who acted and reacted in the period when the social, psychological and intellectual changes were being brought about in Bengal as a result of contact between the East and the West. In this period of cultural transformation and awakening Ramkamal Sen (1783-1844) played an important and interesting role. But so long he has been an unnoticed personality. I have studied in this book the life and activities of this man on the basis of most of the sources available in India and also some sources available in England.

I have studied the career and activities of Ramkamal Sen because his life and ideas illustrate some highly significant trends of the nineteenth century. A study of the activities of this man may lead us to revise certain prevailing conceptions about nineteenth century Bengal. Just by way of illustration one can point out the present notion that the nineteenth century Bengali elite in Calcutta was divided into two major groups—conservatives and liberals.

It is commonly held that Rammohan Ray and his followers represented the progressive forces and those who opposed them were reactionary in character and views. As to the linguistic controversy it is pointed out that during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the British official and Indian public opinion had been divided into champions of orientalism and those of anglicism. A study of the ideas of this man is apt to disturb such long-held views. It is equally interesting to note that Ramkamal was active in quite a number of fields. He had deep connections with the Asiatic

Society of Bengal, the Hindu College, the Sanskrit College, the Medical College, the Calcutta School Book Society, the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India and so on. These made him eminent among the small band of enlightened Indians in the town of Calcutta. He was a "chartered member of Dharma Sabha". He was one of the Directors of the Hindu College who voted that it was "necessary" to dismiss controversial Derozio from that institution. He was one of the founders of the Landholders' Society.

Ramkamal was also an author of eminence. In the list of publications of the School Book Society one can find him as a compiler and a translator along with others of at least two Bengali books meant for school children and those publications satisfied the crying need of the hour.

He also published a book on Western Medicine in Bengali and perhaps this was the first attempt to write a book on Western Medicine in the language of Bengal. He published a Dictionary of over 1100 pages containing Bengali equivalents of 60000 English words.

Again, it is no less instructive to study the career of a man who accomplished so many things within the short span of human life. Moreover, the activities, ideas and career of Ramkamal Sen represent the character and attitude of the first generation of the English-educated Calcutta elite after the firm establishment of the British rule in Bengal. It will not be too much to claim that Ramkamal Sen was perhaps the first traditional modernizer of Bengal who, living in the tradition-bound society, had the openness of vision to appreciate the tremendous changes the western concepts of life and ideas were destined to bring about in the Indian social context.

The life, ideas and activities of this important man have not been studied critically and in great detail so far. Only in 1880, Peary Chand Mittra wrote a booklet on this important man. Lokenath Ghose in 1881 wrote only eleven pages on him. A full biography of Ramkamal Sen was virtually overdue and I have attempted to study the ideas and activities of Ramkamal Sen on the basis of original sources.

Modern sociologists hold that social changes are brought about through institutions and organisations. In this connection I have studied almost all the institutions with which Ramkamal was connected and which moulded his ideas and were influenced by his personality. The interactions of a leading member of the Calcutta elite with the important institutions of Calcutta have been the subject-matter of my

study. In other words, I have been highly selective in my approach. My endeavour is not to write a chronological account of the career of Ramkamal Sen but to appreciate the background in which this man played his role. Hence, the book bears the title 'Ramkamal Sen and His Times'.

In this endeavour I have limited my presentation to nine chapters. Chapter 1 is in the nature of an introduction. Here, I have traced briefly the social, political and economic forces then at work, and with this brief background I have given an outline of the career, habits and the way of life of this man. My attempt here is to show the growth and development of the mental attitudes of the man. Naturally I have referred to the educational attainments of Ramkamal and also the mode of life of this man. In order to give a full picture of the man, his hopes and fears, his aspirations and failures, I have referred to his last days also.

After placing the man in the proper perspective, I have attempted to study his multifarious activities. I have not been chronological in my approach. My emphasis is on his activities in terms of institutions. Hence, Chapter 2 deals with the association of Ramkamal with the learned Societies. The Asiatic Society of Bengal was the most important institution of the time. I have naturally traced the role of Ramkamal in this learned Society. In order to make the subject clear and intelligible I have referred to other personalities and forces then at work in the Asiatic Society of Bengal. This study has been done with reference to the original manuscript proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and with the aid of papers of Ramkamal Sen available in the India Office Library and Records. The Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India was another important learned body of Calcutta and here this Indian played a significant part. I have depicted the role of Ramkamal in this Society with reference to all the available original proceedings of this Society. Further the Gaudiya Samaj was an organisation of the Bengalis of Calcutta. I have studied the role of Ramkamal in this body with the aid of the proceedings of the Samaj available in the British Library (British Museum).

Chapter 3 deals with the major employments of Ramkamal. In writing out this Chapter my purpose has been twofold. First, I have described the important positions which Ramkamal, an Indian, held in the Calcutta Mint and the Bank of Bengal. Naturally, these two fields of employment also help us to know something of the inner history of the Calcutta Mint and the Bank of Bengal. These two institutions offered Ramkamal major employments. They were the sources of

his fortune. But he left more than what he had received from these two major employments. Therefore, in the second place, I have tried to search for the bases of the opulence of Ramkamal. A brief study of the financial base of Ramkamal has been included in this chapter. Again the term major employments requires some explanation. Ramkamal was an employee of the Hindoostanee Press, of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and even of the Government of Bengal as an assistant to the General Committee of Public Instruction. He also drew a small amount of money as a translator from the Translation Department of the Bengal Government and also a small salary as Accountant and subsequently as the Secretary to the Sanskrit College, Calcutta. Some of these appointments were insignificant in nature and they have been included elsewhere. Naturally, these employments have not been discussed here. While discussing the role of Ramkamal Sen in the Calcutta Mint I have utilised the proceedings of the Mint Committee available in the National Archives of India. But in writing the role of Ramkamal Sen in the Bank of Bengal, I, in spite of best efforts, could not get the original proceedings of the meetings of the Board of Directors of the Bank of Bengal. I have largely depended on the printed sources of the Bank of Bengal some of which are semi-contemporary. I have also freely utilised the original letters of Ramkamal Sen procured from the India Office Library and Records to make this chapter more authentic.

In Chapter 4 I have studied the Sati controversy and the role of Ramkamal Sen in this controversy. I have written this chapter with reference to all the contemporary sources available in India. I have freely utilised extracts from contemporary periodicals and the last will and testament of Ramkamal Sen. The Sati question reflects the attitude of Ramkamal towards an important social problem. This chapter also reveals his sympathy for women. Logically, his attitude towards the law of inheritance also comes under this chapter which I have studied with the help of original letters of Ramkamal Sen. The missionaries had voiced a steady demand for changing the law of inheritance of the Hindus and that demand would later on lead to the enactment changing the law of inheritance. In this context the ideas of Ramkamal are interesting.

Chapter 5 deals with Ramkamal's attitude towards the new associations and his attitude towards the British rule. I have here taken into account his disappointment with purely socio-religious organisation like the Dharma Sabha and his initiative in forming a

political organisation like the Landholders' Society. This, I deem, is very important because here was a member of the Calcutta elite who was trying to analyse the problems facing the Indians at the political level in the forties of the nineteenth century. Logically, I have separately analysed Ramkamal's attitude towards the British rule. My study is based on contemporary journals, letters of Ramkamal and the proceedings of the Landholders' Society.

Chapter 6 is a study of Ramkamal and the educational institutions. Here I have included four major educational institutions—the Hindu College, the Sanskrit College, the Medical College and the Parental Academic Institution with which Ramkamal had been closely connected. I have written this chapter on the basis of the original available sources. This chapter is important on two counts. First of all, it reveals Ramkamal's interest in education. Secondly, this interest was very broad. If he was interested in the well-being of the Sanskrit College, his interest in the Parental Academic Institution was no less.

Chapter 7 deals with Ramkamal's literary pursuits. Ramkamal was a man of literature and his contributions were useful. He may be called the pioneering author of those books which led to the foundation on which, later on, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar built his edifice. He wrote books for the school children, a treatise on western medicine and above all a monumental Anglo-Bengali Dictionary. This chapter is also based on the reports of the Calcutta School Book Society, the original works of Ramkamal Sen and the original letters of Ramkamal Sen.

Chapter 8 is a study of Ramkamal in relation to public health and charity. Here I have studied the municipal problems facing Ramkamal's Calcutta and Ramkamal's role in the Fever Hospital and the District Charitable Society. This Chapter is also written on the basis of available original sources.

The last and the concluding chapter is Chapter 9. In this chapter I have drawn my conclusion on the basis of the study made in the above mentioned eight chapters.

A Note on Spelling

The nineteenth century English spelling of Ramkamal's name has been used in the title of this book. In the body of the book, however, the current Bengali usage has been followed. So 'Ramcomul' has been spelt as 'Ramkamal'.



Ram Comayen

Ramkamal Sen : The Man

The eighteenth century forms a very crucial epoch in the history of India. It saw the collapse of the Mughal Empire and the emergence of regional powers. The regional powers or the transitional states began to collapse because of the pressure of the East India Company. Bengal was the first of these major transitional states which succumbed to the pressure of the English Company. Through a political process the English became the masters of Bengal and by the year 1772, they took up the administration of Bengal. By the period of Cornwallis, the British administrative system was firmly established and a distinct type of land revenue system called the Permanent Settlement was enforced.

The period of Ramkamal Sen (1783-1844) was the period when Bengal was passing through a state of exhaustion. The old political, social and even the cultural systems had received a staggering blow. The new was yet to be born. Bengal was passing through the pangs of a new birth. The traditional society was not in a position to meet the powerful influx of new ideas. At this critical moment when the national vitality was at its lowest ebb, a few outstanding men were born in Bengal. As Ronaldshay puts it, "a few strong characters stood out as exceptions, notably Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dewan Ramkamal Sen, who welcomed what they perceived to be good in the civilisation of the West for its own sake, and who doubtless believed that a synthesis of all that was best in the thought and practice of East and West was both desirable and possible".¹

Ramkamal was the fourth son of Gokulchandra Sen.² Gokulchandra Sen was a resident of Gariffa, a village of 24-parganas lying opposite the town of Hooghly. The Sens were Baidya * by caste³ which had a strong literary background. Gokulchandra knew Persian.⁴ He was a Shristadar in the Hooghly court on a salary of Rs. 50/- a month.⁵ The name of Ramkamal's mother was Draupadi who was the daughter of Narayan Ray of Halisahar, a village not far from Gariffa.⁶ Ramkamal was born on the 15th March, 1783.⁷ He cannot however, be said to have been born with a silver spoon in his

mouth as his father had to maintain a big family consisting of six sons⁸ * and a few daughters.

In those days rural Bengal had no elaborate arrangement for imparting education. In the advanced villages there were one or two *pundits* who imparted rudimentary Vernacular and Sanskrit education to the students. Ramkamal was placed for tuition in his village under Seromani Baidya and learnt elements of the Sanskrit language. Even at this early stage Ramkamal showed his inquisitiveness for learning more and more. He often asked for more lessons from his tutor but as the village *pundit* had a very limited fund of knowledge, he naturally remonstrated.⁹

About the end of 1800 Ramkamal left his native village and came to Calcutta.¹⁰ We are not in a position to say definitely why Gokulchandra Sen sent Ramkamal to Calcutta. It may however, be suggested that Calcutta then offered various avenues of employment and an employment could be obtained somewhat easily if one could have some rudimentary acquaintance with the English language. The Persian language was then losing its economic worth and English had to be learnt. Most probably Ramkamal came to Calcutta for picking up a workable knowledge of English and thereby securing a job. In Calcutta, there was some limited opportunity of learning English. In the preface to his Dictionary Ramkamal gave a vivid account of the beginning of English education in Bengal and the state of English education in particular at the time when he came to Calcutta.¹¹ A good colloquial knowledge of English "was a sure passport to distinction"¹² and therefore the demand for English education was great.

But even in Calcutta during the childhood of Ramkamal Sen, the present system of education had hardly been conceived. There were a few Europeans who taught the Indian children English in their houses. Spelling books and copies for writing were introduced into Indian houses and even some Indian teachers possessing a smattering of English were employed as private tutors or they at times opened schools. The "desire of making money served as a great incentive to English education as Persian education was sought for under the Mahomedan administration".¹³ So, when Ramkamal came to Calcutta the scope of receiving English education was very limited for want of books as well as proper persons capable of imparting English education to the students.

Ramkamal commenced his English studies at Ramjay Dutt's school at Colootolla about 1801.¹⁴ In this school the boys used to make

extracts from the Tooteenamah and Arabian Tales which were used as class books.¹⁵ It was perhaps his poverty which might have compelled him "to give up all idea of seeking for education elsewhere."¹⁶

It appears that Ramkamal had applied himself with diligence to the acquisition of English which he spoke with considerable fluency. His writings show that he had virtually mastered that language. It is very difficult to say that Ramkamal had achieved this remarkable distinction from the school where he had been hardly for a year. Actually he was a self-taught man and continued to learn throughout his life. He could not advance much in Sanskrit though he showed great interest in its literature and he was an excellent Bengali scholar.¹⁷

After acquiring elementary knowledge of English Ramkamal took a job under Namey, an Assistant to W. C. Blacquiere.¹⁸ W. C. Blacquiere was the "senior Magistrate" of Calcutta.¹⁹ In 1803 his father brought him to R. Blechynden, the Civil Architect of the Government and under him he served as an apprentice.²⁰ He became associated with the Asiatic Society of Bengal as a writer in "1803/4".²¹ He joined Dr. Hunter's Hindoostanee Press as a compositor on a salary of Rs. 8/- a month in July, 1804.²² In 1808, he was in the service of the Chadni Hospital.²³ His acquaintance with Dr. H. H. Wilson commenced at the end of 1810.²⁴ This constituted the most significant event in the life of Ramkamal as Dr. Wilson acted as the guide and philosopher of this Bengali youth throughout his whole life. In 1812, he was under Colonel Ramsay at the Fort William College.²⁵ When Dr. Wilson became the Secretary to the General Committee of Public Instruction, Ramkamal acted for sometime as an Assistant in the said Department. In 1824 his name was to be found on the pay roll of the Sanskrit College, Calcutta, as the Accountant on a pay of Rs. 40/-per month.²⁶ In 1827, he joined the Mint at Calcutta as the Bullion Keeper on a monthly salary of Rs. 250/-²⁷ and in November, 1832 he became the Dewan of the Bank of Bengal, a kind of State Bank established in 1806, on a pay of Rs. 200/- per month in addition to a commission at the rate of 5%²⁸. It is interesting to note that Ramkamal almost always held more than one assignment throughout his service career except for the last few years of his life. He resigned from the Bank in July, 1844 and died on the 3rd August of the same year.

The personal life of Ramkamal Sen was not marked by any

deviation from that of an average orthodox Bengali *Bhadralok* of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Ramkamal was married on the 10th December, 1803²⁹ at the age of twenty. The name of his wife was Chandramoni Devi.³⁰ Unlike the *Baboos* of his age he was free from the prevailing vices and he was faithful to his only wife.

Ramkamal had in all eleven children. They were (1) Harimohan, (2) Pearymohan, (3) Nrityamayee, (4) Haladhar, (5) Satyamayee, (6) Bindumayee, (7) Durgamayee, (8) Sridhar, (9) Bangshidhar, (10) Muralidhar and (11) Tarama.³¹ Of the six sons, two namely Haladhar and Sridhar expired at the age of 12 years and 10 years and a half respectively.³² In his Last Will and Testament could be found the names of his sons, daughters and other relatives. In that document we would find the names of his two daughters only.³³ Names of the other three daughters had not been mentioned. Ramkamal himself wrote that he had lost a daughter in 1840.³⁴ In all, he lost three daughters and two sons in his life time.

Gokulchandra Sen had a peculiar reputation for his attachment to the *Vaisnavas* and for his rigid practice of the religious austerities of his sect. An orthodox *Vaisnava* like his father, Ramkamal was naturally of a religious turn of mind and continued to the end of his life to be an orthodox Hindu, faithful and true to the religion of his forefathers. But his orthodoxy was such that while firm and unyielding in his adherence to his own religion, he freely entered into European society in which he was at least held in real respect. Nor did his orthodoxy prevent him from appreciating the great value of those parts of the Western system of principles and practices which were calculated to revolutionize and regenerate Hindu society to new and improved forms of life.³⁵

Ramkamal personally never liked to receive any service from others. His daughters-in-law could not have any chance to render service to him. Only his daughter Bindu who lost her husband at the age of 14 years was allowed to do his personal work. Ramkamal accepted her services only on the consideration that her mind would remain somewhat free if she was allowed to render services to him.³⁶ It was his invariable practice to sit every morning amid a grove of *tulsi* plants, sacred to *Vishnu*, and to perform his daily prayer at which he was punctual, never allowing any business arrangement however pressing, to distract him or take him away from the charge of this duty, so pleasing to him above all other duties.³⁷ He worshipped his deity "*Sri Sri Issore Greedharee Selah Thakoor*".³⁸ In the inventory

of the estate effects and property of Ramkamal Sen, a house in Puttaldanga had been mentioned. Saradasundari, the daughter-in-law of Ramkamal Sen, wrote that the house at Puttaldanga (afterwards Albert College) was built by her father-in-law for his *Guru* or spiritual guide. Whenever his *Guru* paid a visit to Calcutta, he used to stay in that house.³⁹ Ramkamal's love of Sanskrit literature was great and in that house he used to spend sometime with the professors of the Sanskrit College with which he was closely connected.⁴⁰

Ramkamal observed *ekadasi* * regularly.⁴¹ All the year round the *Bhagavata* was read in the evening in his house and he advised his wife, daughters-in-law and daughters to listen to it.⁴² He himself used to spend sometime in the evening hearing the *Puranas* and in conversation with the *pundits*. It was the practice of Ramkamal Sen to transport himself often to the spiritual region and compose hymns.⁴³ Among the archives of his family had been found some manuscripts of prayers and hymns, composed by him, which abound with high devotional fervour. They would show the intensity of his love for the common father of mankind.⁴⁴ Saradasundari noted with great astonishment that Ramkamal was never seen to shed tears when he lost some of his children. On those occasions, he would go to the roof of his house and sit silently with his prayer beads, totally absorbed in meditation. There was no doubt that he was involved in family life. He was also a properties man. ** But a sense of detachment always operated in the higher region of his mind. He was deeply involved in the material world but cravings for material things could not engulf his whole being⁴⁵—a peculiar aspect of Hindu mind which cannot be explained in terms of cold logic.

Ramkamal was simple in his food habits. In the morning he would take some light food and then go to office. Before going to office, he would call Bindu, his daughter and give her a few rupees and ask her to prepare sweetmeats for him. It was a pleasure for his daughter and daughters-in-law to prepare sweetmeats for Ramkamal working for hours in the midday. When Ramkamal returned from office in the afternoon, he was presented with the sweetmeats in big plates of silver. Ramkamal would express his joy at the sight of those plates but he would take very little, a piece or two of the sweetmeats.⁴⁶ He would take a cup or two and sometimes three cups of tea, of which he was very fond.⁴⁷ But he would not take milk. He would take tea with sugar candy only. He believed that milk was a kind of juice of the cow. He was a vegetarian. In the evening he

would cook his own meal himself. Saradasundari wrote that she desired much to cook food for her father-in-law but he would not allow it to be done by anybody else. Usually rice and some boiled vegetables or rice and *dal* were the items of his only principal meal in the evening in 24 hours.⁴⁸ This he did quite as much probably from a disposition to self humiliation as from a wish to be assured that his food was strictly in accord with the tenets of pure Hinduism.⁴⁹ He thought of God and used to think of the Great Power before he took his food.⁵⁰ He was simple in his dress when he stayed at home.⁵¹

Ramkamal was an ideal householder. During winter he would collect his sons and grandsons round fire, and give them baked *chapatees* and taught them to count the name of *Harekrishna* on the finger as an initiatory teaching of godliness.⁵² In her autobiography Saradasundari narrated her early life. Her father was also a resident of Gariffa. She lived in her father's house for about a year after her marriage since at the time of her marriage she was just a girl of nine years.⁵³ Ramkamal, the father-in-law of Saradasundari, used to visit her on Sundays. He would invariably bring for his little daughter-in-law new coins from Calcutta. He loved her like his own daughter. If she was ever found sick, he would go to her personally to offer her tea and dry food.⁵⁴ He loved his grand children much but he never made a show of it.⁵⁵ He would advise the ladies of his house to pray to God so that they could save themselves from sin. They would pray to God seeking His all powerful protection in this world and in the world beyond. He believed that God and God alone was the saviour of all beings. Whenever the ladies of his family requested his permission to observe a vow, he would encourage them and joyfully accede to their request. He gave them prayer beads and asked them to perform *japa* twice daily.⁵⁶ He would also give prayer beads made of *tulsi* to all male children above 5 years of age and teach them to repeat the name of the deity. He gave a rosary to little Keshab, his grandson, whom he loved much. Keshab's mother Saradasundari said that the day Keshab was born, the grandfather came to see the grandson and seeing the baby uttered that Saradasundari would be really happy with her son in her future life.⁵⁷ His prediction was prophetic. Keshab in due course turned out to be a great religious leader.

Devoted as he was to his family, his devotion towards the institutions and organisations which he had served was no less. 'His labour at the Mint was at most times intense for ten or twelve hours

a day"⁵⁸ His labour in the Bank was very heavy.⁵⁹ The Asiatic Society of Bengal stated in their resolution after his death that there was reason to believe that Ramkamal Sen fell a victim to over-exertion due to hard academic exercise combined with the labours which his highly responsible situation of Dewan of the Bank of Bengal necessarily imposed upon him.⁶⁰ In addition to these, he had to perform his duties in various other social and educational organisations. Therefore, the incessant labour both of body and mind began gradually to tell upon his constitution.⁶¹ He had been complaining about his health since January, 1838.⁶² In January, 1840 he reported that he was not in good health. All his brothers were dead. He was the head of his own and their families.⁶³ In August, he wrote that he was just "living or in existence". His health was impaired. Having lost brothers, sister and daughter in a short time, he felt "no comfort in domestic life." He wanted a change.⁶⁴

In November, 1840 Ramkamal stated that there was no comfort and security for a man who wished "to do justice to himself and live a quiet life." He wished he could go to Dr. Wilson and "spend the remainder of his days in a foreign country." But he was an old man with impaired health and as such was afraid of going out of the country. He had a rheumatic affliction in his arm and he could not write a legible hand.⁶⁵ In February, 1841 he reported that his hand was better. Doctors said when the weather would change, he might be well again. He was thinking of retiring from the arduous responsibilities of the Bank. He might "go and settle at Agra", leaving his family in Bengal and the members of his family could visit him occasionally on their way to and from Brindabana.⁶⁶ In May, he wrote that his arm was "not in proper state yet." He was not comfortable.⁶⁷

Ramkamal was found to be describing the stark realities of his life in his letter in June, 1843. He stated that an old man like himself who had spent 40 years in business, the only fear he might have after retirement was "how to spend time, how and where". With the new generation of Europeans and the new society he differed in many things. Friends in the literary societies and establishments were all gone. Spending time on books was his only pleasure. But his sight was very weak. Long, regular and incessant application would not suit. He could not live in the *mofussil* because it was unsafe and if he remained in Calcutta idle, it was expensive and inconvenient.⁶⁸

At this stage of life, Ramkamal was found to be suffering from

a sense of ennui. Weariness and dissatisfaction were the key notes which could be discerned from his statements. It was not only that Ramkamal was becoming friendless in the new generation of Europeans. The rising educated generation of Bengal also could not satisfy him. He had practically little faith in them. It would therefore be natural for the man whose mission in life was to educate his countrymen to be dissatisfied. Ramkamal and his friends could not expect that their mission would be carried forward by the educated men of the young generation who were in fact the products of their long and incessant labour. Therefore he was certainly suffering from a crisis. Physically he seemed to be a wreck. Acute "erve arthritics" made him incapable of writing. Spending time on books was his only pleasure. But that too became impossible because of his dim vision. Loss of some nearest relations gradually made him uncomfortable in domestic life. Intellectually he was living a life in isolation for his friends in the literary societies were all gone. He was unable on ideological grounds to establish rapport with the younger generation. He confessed that he did not "agree with them."⁶⁹

Ramkamal strongly felt that under foreign rule, even when the immediate ruler was a liberal one, "much inconvenience and distress" were to be felt. He could foresee correctly that under foreign masters "no Hindu" could be "independent".⁷⁰ He wished to "go and settle at Agra", leaving his family in Bengal. It should be noted that Agra was very near to Mathura and Brindabana, the two most sacred places for the *Vaisnavas*. So the nearness to those places might be the reason of his preference for Agra. But the question remained why he did not select Brindabana or Mathura as the possible place of his abode instead of Agra. A traditional wealthy *Vaisnava* would always prefer to pass the evening of his life in Benaras or Brindabana. That was the order of the day.⁷¹ Ramkamal's preference for Agra was possibly because the environment of the Hindu religious centres seemed to him to a great measure "superstitious" and the environment of Agra, a seat of Muslim culture, was considered by him at least less superstitious, than the Hindu religious centres. Western culture taught him to shun superstition. He did not like to "be a superstitious fool, a descent from his neighbours and family",⁷² though he was deeply religious. In fact, he was religious without being superstitious.

Since he had "seen different stages of life",⁷³ his wisdom dictated him not to quarrel with the prevailing circumstances. He said that he was "tired" of this world.⁷⁴ But in reality he was tired of his known

society only. His interest in life was not totally lost. He was, therefore, frantically seeking a refuge among an alien or unfamiliar society in quest of something new. His plan to live a life in a comparatively less superstitious environment, being free from the pulls and pressures of the traditional society, far off from his family and among an unfamiliar people stemmed possibly from his innermost urge for introspection and for finding out new hopes to live afresh in a new place among an unfamiliar people with a different culture. He was used to cosmopolitan culture. Brindabana might have been too small a place for him. This attitude to life was significant for it marked a sharp departure from the traditional attitude of the orthodox Hindus to life in its closing hours. In 1843 severe illness obliged him to go up the river for a change of climate.⁷⁵ It was in January, 1844 that he wrote last to Dr. Wilson. He was expecting a letter from him which would be "a comfort in the present state" of his health.⁷⁶ Ramkamal signed and executed his Last Will and Testament on the 7th June, 1844 and on the 10th June he drew up a "*Crore Pottro* or Codicil" to his Will.⁷⁷

Not finding himself better he went to Gariffa, where he lived for twenty one days on the river. He seemed to be aware that he was about to depart and was therefore absorbed, in *japa* two days before he left for Gariffa. Two days before his death, he was unable to speak, though he appeared to be fully conscious of what was going on. Before he lost his power of speech, he impressed on the members of the family, the duty they had to perform to each other.⁷⁸

In August, 1844, Piddington wrote to Dr. Wilson on the health of their common friend Ramkamal Sen. Their "worthy friend Ramcomul Sen" was "in a very bad health from nerve arthritic". Piddington feared "much derangements, if not some organic ones, with great depression or rather indifference for as usual in such complaints."⁷⁹

Ramkamal Sen "departed this life on the banks of the river Hooghly at Gorcefah on the Third day of August,"⁸⁰ 1844. *

The Sens of Gariffa were *Vaisnavas*. Therefore, following the tradition of the family, it was at Brindabana that some remnants of Ramkamal's body were buried.⁸¹ **

Ramkamal instructed the executors of his Last Will and Testament that they would "expend for his *Sradh* 4000, four thousand Rupees in the whole."⁸² In the wealthy Hindu community of Calcutta lavish expenditure on *sradhs*, marriages etc. continued even in the second

half of the nineteenth century. "On the traditional plane, the metropolis continued to be a centre of grand *sradhs*, a typical expression of traditional activity" ⁸³ In 1846 two lakhs of Rupees had been spent on a grand *sradh* ⁸⁴. Ramkamal's attitude to these important family events was quite different. He did not favour irrational and wasteful expenditure. He clearly instructed in his Last Will and Testament that "in the whole" a sum of Rupees 4000/- was to be spent on account of his *sradh*. He was honest to his conviction. It should, therefore, be admitted that his opinion on the question of expenditure on important family events of the wealthy Hindus was far in advance of his time. His opposition was clear to such excessive expense.

On the 7th August, a meeting was held at the premises of the Asiatic Society of Bengal to mourn the sad demise of Dewan Ramkamal Sen. ⁸⁵ *The Friend of India* published a long obituary of Ramkamal. It said that of the "native gentlemen" who had raised themselves to eminence in "the native society of Calcutta" by the acquisition and distribution of wealth, within the nineteenth century, Ramkamal Sen would be freely acknowledged as the most remarkable. Others had risen from equal obscurity to greater wealth, but none had been "distinguished for their intellectual attainments." ⁸⁶

Dr. H. H. Wilson, who was Ramkamal's patron and mentor wrote on the 2nd November, 1844 that the close relations for many years had made him thoroughly acquainted with his late friend's merits, and his tried worth had secured for him his esteem and affection. He observed that during his time "the Society of Calcutta, Native or European" could not boast of "a more sound and sterling character." than Ramkamal Sen. ⁸⁷

Reference Notes

1. Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Heart of Aryavarta*, London, 1925, p. 45.
2. Saradasundari Devi, *Atmakatha*, ed. J. Khastagir, Dacca, 1913, p. 6.
- * Baidyas of the *Rarh* area of Bengal were divided into three branches or *samajas*, namely *khanda samaj*, *satsaika samaj* and *Saptagram samaj*. Baidyas of Tribeni, Kanchrapara, Halisahar, Kumarhatta, Gouriva or Gariffa, Somra, Sukre, Natagore, Digre, Balagarh, Guptipara etc., the villages situated on the both sides of the river Hooghly, belonged to *Saptagram samaj*. Bankimchandra Chatterjee, *Iswarchandra Gupter Jibancharit O Kabitwa*, ed. Bhabatosh Dutt, Calcutta, 1968, p. 58.
3. Lokenath Ghose, *The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Part II, Calcutta, 1881, p. 127.
4. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 6.
5. Lokenath Ghose, *The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Part II, Calcutta, 1881, p. 128.
6. Peary Chand Mittra, *Ramkamal Sen* (a Bengali translation), ed. J. C. Bagal, Calcutta, 1964, p. 118.
7. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 2.
8. Saradasundari Devi, *Atmakatha*, ed. J. Khastagir, Dacca, 1913, p. 6.
- * Gokulchandra Sen had six sons. They were Gopimohan, Madanmohan, Rammohan, Ramkamal, Ramdhone and Ramnidhi. Gopimohan and Ramnidhi, the eldest and the youngest sons of Gokulchandra Sen had no children of their own.
9. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 6.
10. Lokenath Ghose, *The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Part II, Calcutta, 1881, p. 129.
11. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee : translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary*, Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, pp. 16-18.
12. *The Friend of India* quoted in Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 41.
13. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 5.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
15. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee : translated from Todd's edition of Johnson's English Dictionary*, Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 18.
16. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 7.
17. Dr. Wilson's letter dated the 2nd November, 1844, quoted in Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 44.
18. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 7.
19. J. C. Marshman, *Benqal As It Is*, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. III, January—June, 1845, p. 208.
20. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 7.
21. Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, meeting dated the 12th December, 1832, Vol. 4, pp. 144-145.
22. Lokenath Ghose, *The Modern History of the India Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Part II, Calcutta, 1881, p. 129.
23. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 7.

24. Dr. Wilson's letter dated the 2nd November, 1844, quoted in Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 43.
25. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 7.
26. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Sanskrita Kaleger Itihas*, Part I, 1824-1858, Calcutta, 1948, p. 7.
27. Mint Com. Progs. for 1827-28; Vol. I, No. 52. Letter from H. T. Prinsep, Actg. Secretary to the Government to the Mint Committee, dated Calcutta, the 8th March, 1827.
28. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed. *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. II, 4th ed., Calcutta, 1384 B. S., pp. 445-446.
29. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 7.
30. The Last Will and Testament of Ramkamal Sen.
The Last Will and Testament and the Codicil executed by Ramkamal Sen as found in the Record Room of the Calcutta High Court have been reproduced in Appendix No. I.
31. Pravat Basu, *Maharani Sucharu Devir Jiban Kahini*, Calcutta, 1369 B.S., p. 319.
32. Saradasundari Devi, *Atmakatha*, ed. J. Khastagir, Dacca, 1913, p. 7.
33. The Last Will and Testament of Ramkamal Sen.
34. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 6 August, 1840, MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
35. Lokenath Ghose, *The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Part II, Calcutta, 1881, p. 128.
36. Saradasundari Devi, *Atmakatha*, ed. J. Khastagir, Dacca, 1913, pp. 4-5.
37. Lokenath Ghose, *The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Part II, Calcutta, 1881, p. 138.
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Raghnunandana Bhattacharyya, *Tirhi-tattauam*, with comm. of Kashiram Vachaspati, ed. Hrisikesh Sastri, Calcutta, 1313 B.S., p. 550.
41. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 37.
42. Saradasundari Devi, *Atmakatha*, ed. J. Khastagir, Dacca, 1913, p. 9.
43. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 36.
44. Lokenath Ghose, *The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Calcutta, 1881, Part II, p. 138.
- ** A list of his property has been given in Appendix No. II.
45. Saradasundari Devi, *Atmakatha*, ed. J. Khastagir, Dacca, 1913, p. 8.
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47. Lokenath Ghose, *The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Part II, Calcutta, 1881, p. 138.
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50. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 36.

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54. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
58. Dr. Wilson's letter dated the 2nd November, 1844, quoted in Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 45.
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60. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*; New Series, Vol. XIII, Part II, July—December, 1844, Proceedings of the Asiatic Society, Meeting dated the 7th August, 1844, pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii.
61. Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 35.
62. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 4th January, 1838, MSS Eur. E301/2.
63. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 20th January, 1840, MSS Eur. E301/3.
64. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 6th August, 1840, MSS Eur. E301/3.
65. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 15th November, 1840, MSS Eur. E301/3.
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67. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 8th May, 1841, MSS Eur. E301/4.
68. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 1st June, 1843, MSS Eur. E301/5.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 15th November, 1840, MSS Eur. E301/3.
71. N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1970, p. 96.
72. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 15th November, 1840, MSS Eur. E301/3.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 6th August, 1840, MSS Eur. E301/3.
75. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 9th August, 1843, MSS Eur. E301/5.
76. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 18th January, 1844, MSS Eur. E301/5.
77. Ramkamal's Last Will and Testament and the Codicil to it.
78. Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 36.
79. Piddington's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 4th August, 1844, MSS Eur. E301/5.
80. The petition before the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court filed by Muttyloll Seal and Tarrachund Mozoomdar executors of the Will, on the 20th December, 1844.

- Peary Chand wrote that Ramkamal Sen died on the 2nd August, 1844. Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 36.
81. Saradasundari Devi, *Atmakatha*, ed. J. Khastagir, Dacca, 1913, p. 14.
- ** Usually the dead body of a Hindu is burnt. But while burning the body, care is taken to collect a very small piece of bone to be kept in a new earthen pot properly covered with mud, finally to be buried in a sacred place or to be immersed in the sacred water of the *Sangam* at Allahabad. The dead body of Ramkamal Sen was burnt at Gariffa on the bank of the river Hooghly and afterwards a piece of bone was possibly buried in the sacred soil of Brindabana.
82. The Last Will and Testament of Ramkamal Sen, item no. 21.
83. Pradip Sinha, *Social Changes, The History of Bengal 1757-1905*, ed. N. K. Sinha, C.U., 1967, p. 400.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 401.
85. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series, Vol. XIII, Part II, July—December, 1844, pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii.
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2

Ramkamal and the Learned Societies

Section—I

The Asiatic Society of Bengal

Ramkamal Sen was actively associated for long years with the Asiatic Society of Bengal. But it is open to dispute as to when he joined the said Society. An attempt, therefore, has to be made to ascertain the possible year in which Ramkamal associated himself with the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The subject becomes complicated primarily because Ramkamal's biographer, Peary Chand Mitra, and some other eminent authors have made some observations and comments on this issue which appear to be contradictory. Lokenath Ghose informed us that Ramkamal's "first connection with the Asiatic Society commenced in November, 1806."¹ Peary Chand Mitra stated that "in 1818-19" Ramkamal, while in the Hindoostanee Press, might have "attracted the notice of Dr. H. H. Wilson and was appointed a clerk of the Asiatic Society of Bengal on a salary of Rs. 12/-per month."² But these statements cannot be considered tenable if examined in the light of the facts available in the Society's proceedings and in the personal letters of Ramkamal Sen.

In December 1832, Ramkamal wrote to Dr. Wilson, the then Secretary to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, that he "entered into the service of the Society as a writer in 1803/4"³. Unfortunately in this letter Ramkamal did not mention exactly the year in which he had joined the Society. The Asiatic Society of Bengal, during this period, was an institution fully dominated by the Europeans. The aristocratic character of the Society was also noticed by Dr. William Carey.⁴ It would, therefore, not be improper to conjecture that without suitable introduction no Indian could expect the "honour to be attached to so respectable a body of Gentlemen,"⁵ even as a writer.

Ramkamal was in the service of Namey on the 10th December, 1802.⁶ Namey was an Assistant to W. C. Blacquierie,⁷ the senior Magistrate of Calcutta.⁸ David Kopf suggested that Ramkamal apparently impressed W. C. Blacquierie who was also a member of

the Persian group at the Asiatic Society. "In all likelihood through Blacquiere Sen made his first contacts with the Asiatic Society. ... Sen Probably became acquainted with Hunter and Gilchrist either at the Society or at the college and was invited the next year (1804) to work in the Hindoostanee Press as a compositor"⁹

Ramkamal himself wrote that he served the Society "under Dr. Gilchrist, Mr. Home, Dr. Hunter, Dr. Leyden"¹⁰ and Dr. Wilson. In 1803/4, Gilchrist was not the Secretary to the Society though he was found to be an active member in 1803¹¹ and he left India at the end of 1804.¹² Home was the Secretary to the Society in 1803.¹³ In January, 1804, Dr. Hunter was found to be the Acting Secretary to the Asiatic Society.¹⁴ In April, 1804, Dr. Hunter was unanimously elected Secretary to the Society in place of Home.¹⁵

Lokenath Ghose wrote that in July, 1804, Ramkamal entered the service of Dr. Hunter in the Hindoostanee Press and in the same month he was placed in charge of the establishment.¹⁶

If it is assumed that Ramkamal first joined the Press in July, 1804 and then with the assistance of Dr. Hunter came to work in the Asiatic Society of Bengal in the second half of that year, in that case Ramkamal could have no opportunity to work under Home, who was the Secretary to the Society technically upto the 4th of April, 1804 and the question of his working under Gilchrist could not arise at all. Naturally, the assumption of David Kopf seems to be quite reasonable and we are inclined to hold that Ramkamal possibly joined the Society sometime in 1803 when Gilchrist was quite active in the Asiatic Society * and Home was the Secretary to it. It may therefore, be concluded that Ramkamal had joined the Asiatic Society prior to his appointment in the Hindoostanee Press.

As to the position to which Ramkamal was first appointed in the Society there is a lot of confusion. Ronaldshay stated that Ramkamal Sen was "a truly remarkable man, who by sheer force of character and ability had raised himself from the humble position of an assistant type-setter on Rs. 8/- a month in the employment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, to that of a member of the Council of the Society. . . ."¹⁷ The Asiatic Society of Bengal had no printing establishment of its own and therefore, Ramkamal could not be appointed an "assistant type-setter" in the press of the Society.

Since 1804, Ramkamal had been serving both the Hindoostanee Press and the Asiatic Society. In the Press he was a compositor and in the Society, a writer. As a compositor in the Press his salary was

Rs. 8/- a month in 1804.¹⁸ The close relationship of the Asiatic Society of Bengal with the Hindoostanee Press, particularly during the time of Dr. Hunter * and Ramkamal's connections with these two institutions, at the same time, had possibly given rise to confusions over the nature of work done by him in the Society and the amount of money he drew from the Society as his monthly salary.

Ramkamal's acquaintance with Dr. Wilson commenced in 1810. Ramkamal was then in the service of Dr. Hunter. He was, in fact, the "managing man" of the printing establishment of which Dr. Hunter was the principal proprietor. In that year Dr. Wilson and Dr. Leyden "joined Dr. Hunter in the property" and when Dr. Hunter and Dr. Leyden went to Java in 1811, they left the Press under the charge of Dr. Wilson. Dr. Wilson, "was a young man too little acquainted with the business of printing and the real conductor and superintendent was Ramcomul". Dr. Hunter and Dr. Leyden both expired in Java in 1811 and the press came almost entirely into Wilson's hands. He was joined by Capt. Roebuck. Ramkamal continued as before to conduct all the business details until 1828, when the establishment was transferred to other proprietors.¹⁹

In 1809, Farquhar proposed Dr. Wilson to be a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.²⁰ He was elected a member of the Society in February, 1810.²¹ In April, 1811, Dr. Hunter's letter "resigning the office of the Secretary to the Society" was considered and "Dr. Leyden was elected Secretary and Mr. Wilson, Deputy Secretary by ballot"²²

In December of the same year "the Society proceeded to ballot for a new Secretary in the room of late Dr. Leyden ** when Mr. Wilson was duly elected."²³ In June, 1815, Dr. Wilson sent a communication to Harington, the Vice-President, resigning the situation of Secretary to the Society. He wrote that the very limited leisure he possessed, rendered it difficult for him to pay that attention to the duties of Secretary which he would wish to bestow upon them. He therefore wanted to withdraw from the situation.²⁴ Major Weston was elected Secretary in August, 1815.²⁵ In June 1816, Dr. Wilson was again elected Secretary on the departure of Major Weston.²⁶ In November, 1819, Dr. Wilson proceeded to the Upper Provinces on duty and Capt. Lockett was requested to officiate as Secretary during his absence.²⁷

Ramkamal entered into the service of the Asiatic Society as a writer but subsequently he acted as "Registrar and Accountant,

Assistant Superintendent of the Museum and Establishment”²⁸
 In the prospectus of a Dictionary, Ramkamal Sen had been designated as the Deputy Librarian of the Asiatic Society. The prospectus appeared in the Second Report of the Calcutta School Book Society for 1818-19. It was read on the 21st day of September, 1819.²⁹ It could therefore, be safely said that at least in September, 1819, Ramkamal was holding a responsible position in the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Ramkamal in Calcutta and Dr. Wilson in Benares were in touch with each other through correspondence. Ramkamal in a letter in February, 1820, stated to Dr. Wilson that some appointments had been made in the Asiatic Society but “there was nobody in charge of collections.” Ramkamal lamented over the death of Capt. Roebuck whose loss he “felt very severe”. Capt. Roebuck always paid him great attention and treated him often, above himself. He showed an eagerness to do Ramkamal good and offered his assistance if he would ask for any. Ramkamal considered him “most worthy and valuable friend and patron.” He stated that he had enjoyed Wilson’s goodness, uniform attention and indulgence during the last ten years. He was “confident” that Dr. Wilson would not forget him when there was an opportunity of doing him good, especially when he had the misfortune to lose almost all his intimate friends, and his dependence was solely confined to this generous patron.³⁰

At a meeting of the Society in June, 1820, presided over by Marquis of Hastings, it was resolved, that, “Ramcomul Sen be appointed Collector of the Society and that he be instructed to collect the subscription.” It was further resolved that “his salary be raised to Sicca Rs. 50/- for the present and to increase with the collections.”³¹ Capt. Lockett was then the officiating Secretary to the Society. Ramkamal got his promotion within four months after he had earnestly solicited Wilson’s protection and help. So it may not be far from truth to say that Wilson had something to do with this promotion, though he was then at Benares.

The first report of Ramkamal as the Collector was placed at the meeting of September, 1820. It was reported that the collections made from 18 June to 15 September, 1820 amounted to Sicca Rupees 2340 of which Rupees 2000 had been paid into the treasury of Messrs Palmer & Co.³² Returning from Benares, Dr. Wilson resumed his duties as Secretary to the Asiatic Society in the meeting held on 13th April, 1821. In that very meeting in consideration of the addi-

tional duty and responsibility that devolved upon Ramkamal Sen as Collector, the society decided to fix his salary at "70 Rupees a month",³³ of which he received Rs. 50/- as salary and Rs. 20/- for the establishment, he was required to keep.³⁴

In July, 1821, a report from the Collector was submitted to the meeting. In that report Ramkamal drew the attention of the members to the perilous pecuniary condition of the Asiatic Society and stated that out of a total collection of Rs. 8150-6-6, the sum of Rs. 2706/- was recovered from old debts or arrears due.³⁵ The measures taken for the recovery of arrears due to the Society were also reported. A circular under the signature of the Secretary was addressed to those members who were in arrears. In the circular it had been stated that the Society sustained much loss and much inconvenience had occurred to the members themselves, by an irregularity in the collection of the subscriptions, in consequence of which it appeared that several members had "fallen into huge arrears." The members in arrears were requested to clear off their dues and it was stated that in future the demand would be regularly made. But in most cases no reply whatever had been received from the defaulting members. In one or two, explanations had been offered for the causes which had led to the accumulated arrears. Some members desired to continue as members of the Society provided the demand for arrears was withdrawn. In some cases demand had been paid in full and in one, in part.³⁶ It remained for the Society to determine what measures would be adopted in respect of those members who still continued to be in arrears. The Society resolved that the demand for the accumulated arrears be withdrawn, and that such members as were in arrears be considered still attached to the Society provided they consented to pay the subscription due for the last two quarters. It was also resolved that long-standing irrecoverable bills be struck out of the Society's Accounts.³⁷ Statements of collections were submitted before the meetings of the Society from time to time and the collections were made regularly as far as possible.³⁸ So through the strenuous efforts of Ramkamal, the collections of the Society were regularised to a great extent.

In 1828, the question of the printing of the 17th Volume of the *Researches* arose. The accounts of the Treasurers and the Collector were submitted. It appeared that the Society's balance in hand was Rupees 2501. This did not cover the expense of printing of the 16th Volume and it became necessary to provide extra means for the expenditure to be incurred in printing the 17th Volume within

the period in which it might be expected to be published. The Society decided that the materials collected for the 17th Volume should be committed to the press without delay. For the purpose of defraying the cost of its publication, a subscription was opened amongst the members of the Society.³⁹

On January 7, 1829 it was for the first time in the history of the Society that its Secretary proposed names of some important Indians for membership. The proposal was seconded by Dr. Grant. The names proposed were those of Prasanna Kumar Thakur, Dwarakanath Thakur, Shibachandra Das, Rasamaya Dutt and Ramkamal Sen.⁴⁰ In March of the same year they all were elected members of the Society. At this meeting the name of Maharaja Baidyanath Ray was proposed for membership of the Society by Ross, and it was seconded by Dr. Wilson.⁴¹

The meeting of the 6th May, 1829, is significant in the history of the Asiatic Society and also in the career of Ramkamal Sen. The first Indian who attended the meeting on this date, as a full member of the Society, was Ramkamal Sen. No other Indian elected in March last attended this meeting. Maharaja Baidyanath was elected a member unanimously.⁴² Ramkamal Sen proposed the name of Kasinath Mullick for membership. Dr. Wilson seconded the proposal.⁴³

In July, 1829, four Indian members came to attend the meeting. They were Prasanna Kumar Thakur, Ramkamal Sen, Rasamaya Dutt and Shibachandra Das.⁴⁴ Shibachandra Das proposed the names of five gentlemen of the Indian community for membership. Ramkamal Sen seconded the proposal. These gentlemen were: Maharaja Bunwari Govind Rai, Asutosh De, Radha Madab Banerji, Raj Chandra Das and Hara Chandra Lahiri. Prasanna Kumar Thakur proposed the name of Shamlal Thakur. Wilson seconded the proposal.⁴⁵ It would be evident from the proceedings of the meeting of this date that Indians of different shades of opinion began to take interest in the Asiatic Society.

Calder informed the Society that His Majesty the King of Oudh had been pleased to bestow on the Society a donation of Rs. 20,000/- to be laid out in promoting researches in the literature and natural history of this country. Another donation of Rs. 5,000/- had at the same time been presented to the Society for similar purposes by His Majesty's Minister Yatim Adood Dowla. The full amount of both these donations had been remitted by Ricketts, Resident at Lucknow,

who had most handsomely made up a considerable loss by the exchange which would otherwise have fallen on the Society. He further reported that the Society owed these donations to the liberality of the late Vakeel Ashik Allay Khan, who from a desire to gain for his master the honourable reputation of bestowing his wealth on laudable and useful objects was induced to recommend the Asiatic Society and more especially its Physical Branch to the patronage of His Majesty.⁴⁶ The amount of these donations had been deposited at interest with Mackintosh & Co.* The Society sent copies of Researches to the King of Oudh.⁴⁷

The year 1829 was important in the annals of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in the sense that it was in this year that a few respectable Indians were taken in as full members of the Society for the first time and an Indian Prince, i.e. the King of Oudh donated handsomely towards the fund of the Society to carry out its laudable objects. Theoretically, therefore, the Society became an Anglo-Indian organisation.

By 1830 Ramkamal had earned considerable eminence in the Asiatic Society. James Mackillop addressed a letter to Ramkamal Sen from London on the legacy under the Will of late Dr. Bruce to the Asiatic Society. The matter was taken up for consideration and the Society decided to adopt appropriate legal measures to obtain payment of the legacy. Mackintosh & Co., sent a power of attorney to their correspondents in England authorising them to apply for the amount of legacy bequeathed by late Dr. Bruce.⁴⁸

It was reported in 1832 that the amount of the late Dr. Bruce's legacy had been received and invested in Government securities.⁴⁹ Payments from Lucknow and London were substantial and they helped the Society to maintain its activities at least for sometime, even in the face of the commercial crisis of 1832. In September, 1832, Collector Ramkamal's report showed "a balance of outstanding bills of (Rs.) 11,140 of which (Rs.) 3856" might be realised.⁵⁰

The Society passed an important resolution in March, 1831 which had an adverse effect on its finance. It resolved that it would "be optional with members" who had "subscribed for 20 years and upward to continue their pecuniary contributions".⁵¹

In December, 1832, the committee of papers of the Asiatic Society reported the receipt of a letter from Ramkamal Sen addressed to Dr. H. H. Wilson, the Secretary to the Society. In the letter Ramkamal offered some observations regarding the duties of

the office of the Secretary to which he had been attached for a period of 29 years.⁵²

Ramkamal observed that the recent rule practically exempting 20 years' members from paying any subscription had put the finance of the Society at a low key. It was necessary to reduce the expense of the Society. He proposed that his nominal salary might be abolished. He offered his services to the Society without any salary and would have no objection to continue to be in charge of collections and accounts. He would superintend the establishment of the Society with the aid and advice of the Society's Secretary. He wanted to be allowed "a small establishment just sufficient to keep an account of the collection and bring cash for the bills to be sent out".⁵³ Measures suggested by him would effect a monthly saving of Rs. 73/-.⁵⁴

The Society accepted the proposals of Ramkamal and thanked him for his long and valuable services and his disinterested offer of continuing their gratuitous performance. It resolved that, "he be elected Native Secretary to the Asiatic Society". He was also authorised to retain such establishment as was "necessary for the collection of the subscriptions in communication with the European Secretary".⁵⁵ At this meeting, Ramkamal proposed the name of Radhakanta Deb for membership of the Society. Dr. Wilson seconded the proposal.⁵⁶

On December 19, 1832, a special meeting was convened to "consider on the most appropriate mode of expressing" the Society's sentiments upon the approaching departure of its Secretary, Dr. H. H. Wilson. Ramkamal Sen was the only Indian member present at the meeting.⁵⁷

Ramkamal was elected a member of the committee of papers of the Society in January, 1833. Radhakanta Deb of Dharma Sabha fame was elected a member of the Society.⁵⁸ Colebrooke retired from the office of the Agent to the Society in England and Dr. Wilson was requested to fill that situation. Ramkamal Sen was the man who took the initiative to arrive at such a decision.⁵⁹

In spite of the efforts of Ramkamal and a section of the members, the Society could not overcome the financial crisis. The financial depression of 1832 made the financial position of the Society desperate. From the statement of accounts submitted by Ramkamal at the meeting dated the 9th January, 1833, it would appear that the Society

had lost, by the failure of Mackintosh & Co., its Treasurers, a sum of Rs. 11,397-12-6. The Society had 80 subscribing members but "1/5 or 16 subscribers considered as not paying". There were demands on the Society's fund to the amount of Rs. 5559-13-1. The statement prepared by Ramkamal was referred to the committee of papers to "determine as to the best mode of liquidating the demands in question."⁶⁰ The committee of papers had to dispose of two notes to secure Rs. 5,500/- for the liquidation of the debts standing against the Society.⁶¹

In the background of this unsatisfactory financial condition of the Society, Secretary James Prinsep announced at the meeting dated the 27th March, 1833 that materials were collected for another volume of *Researches* and that it was left to the Society to determine whether it would continue to publish the *Researches* in the same form as done heretofore.⁶² Ramkamal Sen, "the Native Secretary to the Society", also placed a memorandum on the subject.⁶³ The substance of the memorandum would be of some importance for it revealed the history of publication of the *Asiatic Researches*, defects in printing, lack of efficient management of sale and the sum spent on printing the publications.

Ramkamal clearly showed year by year from 1799 to 1833 including the first part of the physical class published in 1829 that the expenditure incurred on this account by the Society was Rs. 81,670/- and the amount realised was only Rs. 9,200/-. The Society had to bear a deficit of Rs. 72,800/- for undertaking the publication of the *Asiatic Researches*.⁶⁴ Major points in the memorandum were as follows :

1. The *Asiatic Researches* vols. 1st to 5th were printed by the proprietors of the Calcutta Gazette Press on their own account, and the Society paid for the copies of each number used or taken by it at Rupees 20 per copy.⁶⁵

2. From the 6th volume the Society undertook the publication at its own expense and responsibility.⁶⁶

3. The printing of the *Transactions* had exhausted the Society's fund, and the returns made by the sale of copies would be nominal if the charges for transportation and advertisements etc., were taken into account.⁶⁷

4. The sale of the books both in England and in India had not been properly managed.⁶⁸

5. The number of copies printed was too many. 120 copies were enough to meet the requirements of the subscribing members and the learned bodies in Europe and India.⁶⁹

6. The style of printing, the type, the paper and the awkward size of the volumes, as well as the high price of the work had been prejudicial to its sale in England and India.⁷⁰

7. Copies of the Transactions furnished to the members were charged till 1810, after which every subscribing member had been supplied with a copy gratis, and from that time, the price had been reduced from Rs. 20/- to Rs. 10/-, the cost price. Naturally it made the sale nominal.⁷¹

8. There was sufficient matter for the 18th volume proposed to commence, but the Society had no fund to defray the expense of printing without selling the Government securities deposited in the Treasury.⁷²

9. If the manuscripts of the Researches were clean and the papers were interesting it was supposed that some of the London Printers might undertake the publication, to whom the unsold volumes might be made over.⁷³

10. The publisher might print the work on his own account and the Society was to purchase a certain number of copies it required at the cost price, just as the Bombay Literary and other European Societies were managing their Transactions.⁷⁴

11. There were great many copies of the Researches at the Society's shelves eaten up by insects, and by a resolution a considerable number had been given away gratis, while others were destroyed.⁷⁵

12. 100 copies of each number had been transmitted to England free of cost. 25 for presents to the different societies in Europe and 75 for sale at one guinea each.⁷⁶

After some discussion a committee composed of Dr. J. Tytler, Major Benson, Dr. J. T. Pearson and J. R. Colvin was appointed to consider the best mode of publishing "the continuation of the Researches".⁷⁷ In June, 1833 the report of the committee was placed before the meeting. The special committee wrongly interpreted the spirit of Ramkamal's memorandum and thought that Ramkamal had urged it to stop the publication of the Researches. The committee could not "on the fullest consideration" of the memorandum of Ramkamal Sen give its assent to it. It also could

not agree with Ramkamal in recommending that the volume, if printed at all, should be printed in England. "The pride of a national and independent existence" stood in its way of taking such a course. The moment the printing of the *Researches* was transferred to England the Society would "commit an act of *felo de se*".⁷⁸ But the special committee appreciated other economic measures suggested by Ramkamal Sen.⁷⁹ The committee opined that "every measure of economy" was called for under the prevailing circumstances. The committee strongly recommended that the octavo form might be substituted for quarto volume. The question of "a composition for the quarterly subscriptions" was taken up on the suggestion of a member. The committee recommended that Rs. 500/- or 32 Gold Mohurs which would be seven years' subscription including the admission fee, might be adopted as the amount of composition for new members, with a proportionate scale of rates for those who were already members, should they desire to compound for their future subscriptions. This it did following the principle of the Royal Asiatic Society where the amount of composition was fixed at 50 guineas or ten years subscription.⁸⁰

The Society generally accepted the recommendations of the committee. The Society also approved generally of the suggestion for optional composition of the quarterly subscription. Dr. Tytler, Ramkamal Sen and the secretary were requested to draw up a table of the scale of payment founded on the value of life and period of residence in India as shown by the Society's subscription list.⁸¹ The bills for the 2nd part of the 18th volume of the *Asiatic Researches* or *Transactions* of the physical class were discharged from the fund invested in Government Securities.⁸²

In January, 1834, James Prinsep submitted the Annual Report. In the Report, the receipts and disbursements were exhibited. The printing of the last two volumes necessitated "an encroachment on the stock of the Society to the extent of 7500 Rupees."⁸³ With regard to the collection of the quarterly contributions, the financial depression of 1832 had caused much inconvenience both to the collector and to absent members, and to this cause might be, "attributed the apparently large amount on the defaulters' list." "The contribution of eighty members (without entrance fees) would be Rs. 5,120/-, whereas only Rs. 3900/- were collected," and in this sum was included Rs. 302/- from the Governor General, the Patron of the Society, who contrary to former precedents had liberally directed that he should be charged as an ordinary paying member..⁸⁴

In January, 1835, the Secretary reported that the "outstanding quarterly bills due, but not yet collected was Rs. 2817/-. The publications of last year had been limited to the Index to the 18 volume of quarto Researches, now nearly completed and the monthly journal".⁸⁵ Thus the Asiatic Society was landed into a deep financial crisis for not paying any heed to the judicious advice given by Ramkamal Sen. Ramkamal had tried his best but in vain, to further the objectives of the Society without dragging the Society to the verge of a financial collapse.

The meeting of the Society held in May, 1835, was a momentous one. The Secretary called the attention of the Society to the late important resolution of the Government, suspending the printing of all the oriental works hitherto in the course of publication under the auspices of the General Committee of Public Instruction. He moved a resolution to the effect that a committee be formed in the Asiatic Society to be called oriental publication committee. The principal object of this committee was the completion of the publication of those oriental works which had been hitherto printed under the auspices of the Committee of Public Instruction, but which by a late resolution of the Government, had been suspended, in order that the funds devoted thereto, might be wholly appropriated for purposes of education by means of the English language. The Society should present an humble but urgent memorial to the Government of India, or if necessary to the Court of Directors, setting forth the great national importance of continuing the publication of the series of oriental classical literature it had commenced.⁸⁶ It was resolved "that Mr. Macnaghten and Dr. Mill should be requested in conjunction with the secretaries Mr. James Prinsep and Ramkamal Sen to draw up an urgent memorial to the Government avoiding, to the utmost, all controversial points and to submit it for approval at the next meeting." This was unanimously agreed to.⁸⁷

At the next meeting the draft of a memorial to the Government regarding oriental publications prepared by the special committee of which Ramkamal was an important member had been read by the President, Sir Edward Ryan.⁸⁸ With some amendments the draft was finally approved.⁸⁹ It was addressed to C. T. Metcalfe, Governor General of India in Council. The memorial contained as many as 15 paragraphs. In paragraph 11, it was stated, if the Sanskrit and Arabic languages were to receive no support from a Government which drew an annual revenue of twenty millions from the people by whom these languages were held sacred, it was the decided opinion of the Asiatic

Society that the cause of civilization and character of the British nation would alike sustain irreparable injury.⁹⁰ The Society, therefore, requested the Governor General in Council, if on fuller consideration, any reasonable doubt should be entertained by the supreme Government about the right of the classical Indian literature to a fair proportion of the sum appropriated by parliament "for the revival and improvement of literature, and for the encouragement of the learned natives of India", he would then be pleased either himself to grant or if necessary, to solicit from the Court of Directors, some specific pecuniary aid to be annually expended on these objects. The Society would be happy to undertake the duty of superintending the expenditure of this sum under such checks as the Government might impose.⁹¹ But whatever might be the determination of the Government on this point, the Society entreated the Governor General in Council, that he would afford it the assistance of the learned Indians hitherto employed in these literary undertakings, together with such pecuniary aid as might be necessary to complete the printing of the oriental works, which had been interrupted by the resolution of the Government directing the funds hitherto expended upon them to purposes of English education.⁹²

On July 1, 1835, the reply of the Government was discussed with regard to the specific requests and recommendations contained in the address. Bushby, Secretary to the Government categorically stated that the Government had no intention of soliciting from the Court of Directors any specific pecuniary aid to be appropriated exclusively to the support of Indian literature, beyond the sum already devoted to that object in conjunction with the encouragement of English literature.⁹³ In the 5th paragraph of his letter it was said that the Government also would not furnish any pecuniary aid to the Society for the further printing of those works discontinued by the Government but would gladly make over the parts already printed, either to the Asiatic Society or to any society or individuals, who might be disposed to complete the publication at their own expense.⁹⁴ Thus the Government refused to budge an inch from the policy formulated on the 7th March, 1835.

The society gladly accepted the offer of the Government to transfer the printed portion of the several oriental works then in progress to the Asiatic Society and the Society entertained a reasonable hope of being able to complete the whole of them without involving any material charge on its funds, but the Society requested the Government to withdraw the exception alluded to in the Secretary's letter

and to make over the whole of the publications lately in progress at the education press.⁹⁵ The President was requested to address the Governor General in Council on the subject. The Society decided to prepare and submit a memorial to the Court of Directors and Board of Control stating that the Government here had withdrawn the funds hitherto appropriated to the revival of oriental literature in this country and impressing upon the authorities in England, the importance of having some public funds appropriated to this purpose and requesting them to adopt such means as they might think fit for providing a sufficient sum for this important object.⁹⁶

Bushby informed the President of the Society in reply to the request of the Society that the whole of the oriental works, the publication of which at the expense of the fund for education had lately been discontinued by orders of the Government and those that had been reserved by the Government for completion, might be made over to the Asiatic Society with a view to their completion at the expense and under the superintendence of the Society. The Governor General in Council acceded to the wishes of the Society.⁹⁷ The Society requested the committee of papers to take necessary steps for the reception of the works and also adopt means for the immediate continuation of the printing of the books in the press.⁹⁸ The Society submitted a memorial to the Court of Directors of the East India Company for financial help.⁹⁹

Even though the Government was bent upon stopping the publication of oriental literature, Ramkamal did not lose his interest in classical works of India. With regard to the Calcutta publications of the oriental literature, Ramkamal informed Dr. Wilson in November, 1835, that he would send him a copy of each such book as he would think Dr. Wilson's library should possess. He also stated that "Trevelyan's Roman System * and Macaulay's proceedings" had "given such a shock to Indian literature" that he was "afraid the Asiatic letters" would "not revive again."¹⁰⁰

In March, 1836, it was reported to the meeting that for the custody of the oriental books and MSS transferred by the Government to the Asiatic Society, the Government had agreed to pay Rs. 78 per month¹⁰¹ The Secretary announced in April the transfer and deposit in the Society's rooms of the Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Hindi Manuscripts from the College of Fort William. The number of the Sanskrit works was 1130 volumes, of the Arabic and Persian 2676 volumes.¹⁰²

In June, Ramkamal wrote to Dr. Wilson that the number of new books he sent from Calcutta was very small. There was no publication undertaken by any European and Indians could not afford printing at their own expense. There was no encouragement and Trevelyan's plan had "made such a havock in the literary Department of Government and also in the country that those already printed" had become unsalable, nobody asked "about oriental books."¹⁰³

During the absence of Ramkamal Sen, on a visit to the Upper Provinces, Herambanath Thakur was appointed to officiate as Collector to the Society in December 1836.¹⁰⁴

Ramkamal came to attend the meeting on the 7th June, 1837, after returning from the Upper Provinces.¹⁰⁵ The Secretary to the Royal Asiatic Society of London informed the Asiatic Society of Bengal that the cause of oriental publication "was supported by the united influence and exertions of the Royal Asiatic Society, the Oriental Translation Committee and the result was confidently understood to be, that the Bengal Government was to be instructed, at least, to defray all the expense attending the publishing of the works which it had commenced to print but which it had transferred to your Society to complete."¹⁰⁶ The Secretary observed that the letter from the Royal Asiatic Society was the first official notice he had received from London of the fate of the memorial regarding oriental publications sent to London through the Government and in duplicate through the Royal Asiatic Society in 1835.¹⁰⁷

Ramkamal was a member of the committee of papers of the Asiatic Society from 1833 to 1837.¹⁰⁸ Visibly it appears from a study of the proceedings of the Asiatic Society that the orientalists had been losing their grip on the Society.

A letter from Ramkamal Sen resigning the office of the "Collector and Treasurer of the Society" was placed at the meeting on the 10th October, 1838. In this letter Ramkamal stated that his health was not permitting him to give that attention and time to the duty which it required. He also stated that he had transferred the fund deposited in the Bank of Bengal to James Prinsep, who could draw money when he required without his interference and he had a quantity of outstanding bills and the books of accounts which he would make over to any person nominated as Collector of the Society. The Society expressed its thanks "for his services as Collector and Treasurer" and the Secretary was requested to submit an arrangement for the office at the next meeting.¹⁰⁹

James Prinsep decided to leave India for a period of "two or perhaps three years" for his sickness. His letter of resignation was placed at the meeting dated the 14th November, 1838. The Society decided to communicate to James Prinsep that he would not consider himself as having vacated the situation of Secretary to the Society and to express the hope that on his return to India he would resume the situation of the Secretary.¹¹⁰ It became therefore necessary that during the absence of the Secretary a temporary arrangement would have to be made for conducting the Secretary's duties to cease upon his return and resumption of the office. The Society resolved: "during the temporary absence of Mr. James Prinsep, the Revd. Mr. Malan, Dr. O' Shaughnessy and Baboo Ramcomul Sen be requested to act as joint Secretaries of the Asiatic Society."¹¹¹ For the purpose of carrying on the financial affairs of the Society, a committee was appointed consisting of the President, Ramkamal Sen, Revd. Malan, Dr. O' Shaughnessy, Secretaries and W. P. Grant.¹¹² Herambanath Thakur applied for an increase of his salary. The committee of finance granted an increase of Rs. 20/- per mensem to him.¹¹³

The annual report of the Society could not be read in consequence of the "lateness of the hour,"¹¹⁴ though Ramkamal Sen submitted the account current for the past year, in which a balance of Rupees 7755-1-2 stood in favour of the Society on the 31st December, 1838. He proposed that a sum of Rs. 4,500/- be invested in Company's 5% loan acknowledgment which was seconded by Hare and unanimously agreed.¹¹⁵ A committee was formed to examine a project of electro hydraulic telegraph for effecting correspondence between Calcutta, London and the rest of the world. Ramkamal was a member of this committee.

The available records of the proceedings of the Asiatic Society show that Ramkamal attended the meeting of the Society last on the 3rd July, 1839.¹¹⁶

Even then, Ramkamal did not lose his anxiety for the welfare of the Society and oriental literature. His mental association with the Society remained intact till the last day of his life. His letters to Dr. Wilson reflect his attitude towards the Society and orientalism in general. In February, 1840, Ramkamal wrote to Dr. Wilson about Revd. Street of the Bishop's College—a new comer to this country who had the intimacy and acquaintance with Dr. Wilson in England. Street called on him. It appeared to Ramkamal that he had not yet

properly settled. Ramkamal would return him a visit and see in what way he could be of any service to him. He would "consider him an acquisition to the country" if Street turned out to be "an oriental scholar" and took "an interest in the Asiatic letters". Ramkamal "expected much good from Mr. Malan." Unfortunately "he could not remain in the country". He, therefore, expressed the hope that Street would supply Malan's place in time in the Asiatic Society. But he had some doubts. The Bishop's college was, in his opinion, an awkward place in many respects. The rules and duties did not, as far as he knew, allow the new comers to go on in the way they wished and hence the cultivation of "oriental literature" was "retarded".¹¹⁷

In this connection Ramkamal expressed his opinion about the "*Padrees*" generally. The *Padrees*, wrote he, were an "important class of people" and they were "very desirable" too. Indians "should communicate" and should "have intercourse with them but often their arrival and mixing with their brothers and with Calcutta Society" soon changed them and Indians and *Padrees* became "tired of each other." At least they could not feel that pleasure which they had anticipated before they came to be acquainted. Gradually they became "indifferent or rather cold" when they had the occasion to meet. Ramkamal wrote, "I would wish we should be friendly, sincere and civil in private life as men ought to be, but in public duty or profession let them be polite as friends."¹¹⁸

He further stated that he would "see to what Mr. Street" turned out and then write to Dr. Wilson though he had "great faith" in his "estimate of the merit of persons" who had the happiness of his "intimacy and acquaintance."¹¹⁹

Ramkamal's love of oriental literature was intense. A scholar, whoever he might be, would get his assistance if he would work on oriental literature. Though generally he had reservations about the Christian missionaries or *Padrees*, yet he would help them and praise them if their exertions proved beneficial to Asiatic letters.

In April, 1840, he informed Dr. Wilson that the oriental publication was stopped. He differed "in opinion regarding this and the arrangement made in the Asiatic Society and in consequence", he had "ceased to interfere in its matter." He, however, was "still a member or subscriber to the Society."¹²⁰

The Paris Asiatic Society, wrote Ramkamal, had sent him a Diploma electing him an Honorary Member. He had returned a

suitable acknowledgment but he found some difficulty in sending letters or any present to Paris. Ramkamal wanted to know whether the Paris Society had any agent in London.¹²¹

Regarding Revd. Street of the Bishop's College he wrote, that Street was much engaged with the duties of his Institution. His colleague was laid up with a broken leg on account of a fall from his horse. Street was not able to visit the town. Ramkamal called on him when Street complained of the climate, which seemed to have some effect upon him. He said, he felt disposed to sleep and could not work so regularly as he used to do in Europe. His view as far as Ramkamal had been able to judge, was liberal and if he had time and health he would do well. In this letter he further stated that he was sorry to "hear the account of James Prinsep. His post in the Asiatic Society is still kept vacant."¹²² In July, 1840, the President of the Society reported to the meeting that James Prinsep had died in England.¹²³ In August, Ramkamal wrote that Prinsep's death news had arrived. The Society would, he hoped, "do something to perpetuate the memory of the lamented Secretary."¹²⁴ H. Torrens was made the officiating Secretary to the Society in May, 1840.¹²⁵ Ramkamal had no direct contact with the Society during this period. About Torrens, he wrote, that the gentleman was "an aristocrat".¹²⁶ About the testimonies to be recorded for James Prinsep's memory, Ramkamal informed Dr. Wilson, that a bust in the Society's room be placed and a *ghaut* on the bank of the Ganges be constructed. For the former a sufficient subscription had been raised from among the members of the Society and the public had "contributed about (Rs.) 15000/- towards the latter."¹²⁷ The Institution was, it appeared to Ramkamal, "falling".¹²⁸ In January, 1841, he wrote that Revd. Street was doing well in the Bishop's College.¹²⁹ In October he lamented that hardly anything was being done for "Sanskrit literature". The handsome allowance of Rs. 500/- a month procured for the Asiatic Society had been misapplied and not a syllable was composed or printed. The Court of Directors should demand an account and see what encouragement or aid had been given towards the legitimate object. He further wrote that "Mr. Torrens Bahadoor or *Parsee Khan*", as he was called was full Secretary.¹³⁰ In 1842, he stated that he did not know what was going on in the Asiatic Society and when communication on any subject was received from Dr. Wilson, if it was published with the proceedings of the Society in the newspaper, he might read it. He promised that "on a future occasion" he would give Dr. Wilson his "reasons for ceasing" his "attachment to it". He

remarked that he did "not go near it."¹³¹ Unfortunately he did not communicate his reasons to Dr. Wilson.

In June, 1843, Ramkamal wrote that the "Paris Asiatick Society" had appointed him its Literary Agent to act with the Deputy Secretary of the Calcutta Asiatic Society, H. Piddington but what it required him to do, was not very clear to him.¹³² He wrote last about the Asiatic Society in January, 1844. He believed that a change was "about to take place on Mr. Torrens leaving Calcutta and quitting the principal Secretariship."¹³³

Though Ramkamal did not express his reasons for ceasing connection with the Society yet an idea could be formed about the state of affairs of oriental literature from some comments made by Piddington, Acting Secretary to Asiatic Society in February, 1843, to Dr. Wilson. Piddington wrote that their common friend Ramkamal had shown him the remark of Dr. Wilson that "the Journal was losing its oriental character." According to Piddington, this comment of Dr. Wilson was "most true" and would be "equally applicable to the Transactions". Piddington then adduced the reasons for which such a situation had developed. They had "no oriental students or scholars and consequently no communications of that kind to the Society" as would be seen by its proceedings "and the cause of it" appeared to Piddington "simple". There was "no leisure now a days for such pursuits."

Since the departure of Dr. Wilson, "every member of the different services" had upon an average "30 percent more work to do, 30 percent less assistance to do it with and 50 percent less of income and future prospects to get his mind at ease in that respect." In addition to this there was "the abolition of the college* which with all its faults, produced some noble fruits and kept alive the knowledge of the use and importance of oriental literature to our Government" which had "almost died out now". As the old generation of "college men" died off and the younger public servants were worked far beyond their powers, there was less and less attention paid to literary pursuits—always requiring so much leisure. Men of talent had scarcely time for needful recreation. The abolition of the college seemed to him a "deadly error" which would be felt "day by day and more and more."¹³⁴

Ramkamal died on the 3rd August, 1844. On the 7th August at the meeting of the Society the Secretary announced with deep regret to the Society, the death of an old and highly talented associate, and formerly a valuable servant of the Society, Dewan

Ramkamal Sen, "a gentleman not less distinguished for his great attainments, his enlightened views, his steady attachment to the cause of education, and his untiring energy and industry in every good and useful work, by which the community, Indian or European, could be benefited, than by his modest, and even retiring character, and extensive charity."

The President proposed, and it was agreed that a letter of condolence expressing the deep regret of the Society should be addressed to his family.¹³⁵ Accordingly a letter was addressed to Harimohan Sen, the eldest son of Ramkamal by Torrens on the 9th August, 1844. Harimohan gave a fitting reply to this letter* on the 29th August which was placed at the meeting of the Society on the 4th September, 1844.

Rajendralal Mitra wrote that Ramkamal took special interest in the development of the museum of the Society¹³⁶ and for sometime he acted as the "Assistant Superintendent of the Museum."¹³⁷ Asutosh Mookherjee stated that Ramkamal Sen placed at the disposal of the Society interesting and curious objects collected from various parts of the country.¹³⁸ Of the objects he presented, the following items were of special significance :—

1. Implements used in the Charak Ceremony.¹³⁹
2. Stuff used by the Byragis.¹⁴⁰
3. Musical instruments used by the Indians.¹⁴¹
4. A dried fish.¹⁴²
5. Ornaments worn by Oriah women.¹⁴³
6. 3 small Buddha images.¹⁴⁴

Item Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5 definitely show a trend of mind which was rare among Indians in the early nineteenth century. He had positive interest in Socio-Anthropological studies. Among the important Indians of his days, he was possibly the lone Indian who had an attitude to bring to light some aspects of life of the common man who was meek and in whose culture there was less or no interest among prominent members of the Society.

Charak ceremony for example, was popular among the people of the lower castes. Ordinary villagers both men and women took it for religion. Ramkamal, therefore, took interest in charak ceremony and he thought it proper to present the implements used in the ceremony to the museum of the Society. To know India, the realities of the common man's life had to be carefully studied and thoroughly understood for real India lived in villages submerged in ignorance and prejudices.

Byragis were the village bards. They could be seen in almost every village of Bengal. They had their peculiar dress—ascetic type and they lived on alms given by the householders. They were humble, soft spoken and a very poor people. They were the followers of Vaisnava faith. They had a role to play in the cultural life of Bengal. Devotional songs sung by the Byragis, particularly at dawn, would create a wonderful sensation on the emotional plane of the Bengali people—an experience which could only be appreciated by one who had the fortune to be brought up in a Bengali home.

The philosophy of life of this class of people (Byragis & Bauls) and their life style influenced the thoughts and writings of the Bengali poets, writers and philosophers for ages. Even Rabindranath Tagore, the great humanist was also deeply indebted to them. In the cultural stations like Brindabana, Benares and Puri, they could be found in hundreds. They became the vehicles through whom “the life giving touch of the teachings of Vaisnava saints and poets”¹⁴⁵ was brought to the masses. Ramkamal himself was a devout Vaisnava. The role played by the Byragis in spreading the Vaisnava thoughts among the masses and that too in the language of the masses would be of some interest to the students of Sociology. By donating the stuff used by the Byragis to the museum, Ramkamal attracted the attention of the educated community to this class of common people who actually performed the uncommon task of preaching Vaisnavism in the popular form among the people generally.

Among the musical instruments (51 items in all) presented by Ramkamal, the instruments used by the tribals even were included. He had interest in total Indian culture which had different varieties and forms.

Ramkamal presented ornaments used by Oriah women. They also showed the same trend of mind. He wanted to show an aspect of the cultural life of Orissa, particularly the aesthetic aspect of the ornaments used by the ladies of that part of India, through these ‘gifts.

He had interest in science and scientific objects. He naturally presented a dried fish to the museum, though he himself was a vegetarian. He was never a bigot. He could show catholicity of mind in the interest of education.

He presented three Buddha Images to the museum. He certainly felt that Buddha represented the very spirit of India, though Buddhism was more or less extinct in the land of its birth. He had the fortune to see before his eyes how effectively James Prinsep, his co-labourer in the Asiatic Society, in co-operation with the celebrated Kamalakanto

of the Calcutta Sanskrit College was labouring to reconstruct the history of Buddhist India and whose untiring efforts made it possible to open up a field which was covered under darkness for centuries. A brilliant epoch made its appearance which not only added further dignity to the rich heritage of Indian culture but also made the history of mankind more meaningful.

Ramkamal Sen wrote "a short account of the *charak puja* ceremonies, and a description of the implements used." The paper was read before the Asiatic Society in 1829 and it was published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society in 1833.¹⁴⁶

In this article an account of the origin and practice of the ceremony was given. He described in detail, the various aspects of the ceremony and in the process made some significant comments which would help us to understand his opinion on the subject, particularly a religious one.

The word *charak*, according to Ramkamal was derived from *chakra* or *charaka*, which meant a circle and was used to signify moving or swinging in a circular direction ; *Charak Sanyasa* implied leaving off worldly business, living abstemiously, observing austerities, for the propitiation of Lord Siva. *Charak* festival was improperly termed by many as *charak puja** perhaps from the notion that every ceremony observed by the Hindus of Bengal was a kind of *puja* or religious worship and considered as Hinduism. The result was that the whole body of the Hindus were charged with the absurdity of the act.

The act, wrote Ramkamal, was performed by "the *Sudra* class only, and generally by the lowest castes and most dissipated characters". The greatest number engaged in it as a lucrative exhibition or from a desire to acquire a character for courage in the opinion of their friends. The original rules had mostly fallen into disuse, and new ones were substituted as convenience required. He emphatically declared that the ceremony which had been called an act of piety was "converted into an occasion of dissipation, drinking, gambling, and acts of immorality."

His observations and comments were clear enough. They showed that Ramkamal was not blind to every thing that passed in the name of Hinduism. He had an open mind and he was bold enough to criticise and condemn practices which seemed to him irrational and bad for the community.

Visibly, in the Asiatic Society Ramkamal was mainly concerned with the financial and administrative matters. He was anxious to see

the Society placed on a sound financial footing. His labour in the Society, was due primarily to his love of oriental literature. But the attitude of the Government towards the oriental literature, naturally made Ramkamal anxious about its future.

In 1829, Indians who were elected members seemed to be taking interest in the Asiatic Society. Unfortunately their interest did not last long. In the years that followed their participation in the activities of the Society was becoming negligible. The only exception was Ramkamal Sen who for decades patiently worked for the cause of the Society. Prasanna Kumar Tagore, for some reason or other dropped his membership. He was elected a member again in February, 1837. He was the second Indian who also took some interest in the Society. He had by invitation been joined to the statistical committee of the Society.¹⁴⁷ Membership of the Society was possibly considered to be a status symbol. Moreover, it helped one to have an access to the elite groups of the European community, who were generally highly placed civilians. These reasons prompted wealthy Indians to be associated with the Society.

Ramkamal's involvement was total as long as he felt that the institution was serving the cause for which it was created. He fearlessly put forward his points of views even when they were not favoured by an influential section of the European members.* But when he felt that the institution had ceased to function in the way it should, he quietly withdrew himself.

Ramkamal and Prasanna Kumar both wanted to involve more Indians in the Society. Whether this attitude was the result of group rivalries in the Hindu community outside, or it was their genuine desire to involve educated Indians, could not be definitely ascertained. But Ramkamal and Prasanna Kumār, though they belonged to rival groups of wealthy Hindu community of Calcutta, would be found working together in close co-operation not only in one organisation but in many and it would therefore be logical to hold that their genuine desire was to co-operate with the educated Europeans to explore the past of this ancient land.

Ramkamal had been intimately connected with the Asiatic Society of Bengal since the first decade of the nineteenth century. He had the fortune to witness very closely, the growth, development and decay of the period of orientalism in India. He joined the Society when he was just an obscure young man of 20 years of age. In his boyhood days, it was very difficult to receive satisfactory education

because the opportunity was rare. In fact he was never properly schooled. It was the Asiatic Society of Bengal which was responsible for shaping the mental and intellectual life of Ramkamal Sen.

The atmosphere of the Society was surcharged with the intellectual activities of the best European talents available in the country. Ramkamal was brought up in that atmosphere. In reality he grew with the Society. He assiduously cultivated his mental and intellectual faculties and in due course established himself in the contemporary Calcutta society as an Indian intellectual and a literary man. Dr. Wilson remarked that his "acquirements and his connection with the Asiatic Society fostered in him that love of knowledge which was one of the peculiarities of his character."¹⁴⁸ He kept alive "that love of knowledge" to the end of his life. His intellectual eminence was respectfully acknowledged by the Europeans and Indians alike. He was elected the Native Secretary and a member of the committee of papers of the Society. By honouring Ramkamal, the Asiatic Society of Bengal honoured its first Indian associate who grew and developed with the Society and served the Society with sincerity and dedication up to the end of his life.

Reference Notes

1. Lokenath Ghose, *The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Part II, Calcutta, 1881, p. 129.
2. Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 7.
3. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 4, p. 144, meeting dated the 12 December, 1832.
4. Ram Gopal Sanyal ed., *Reminiscences and Anecdotes of Great Men of India Both Official and Non-official for the Last One Hundred Years*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1895, pp. 38-39.
5. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 4, p. 144, meeting dated the 12 December, 1832.
6. Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 7.
7. Ibid.
8. J. C. Marshman, Bengal As It Is, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. III, January-June, 1845, p. 208.
9. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 117.
10. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 4, p. 144, meeting dated the 12 December, 1832.
11. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 13, meeting dated the 5 October, 1803.
12. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 116.
13. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 2, p. 13, meeting dated the 5 October, 1803.
14. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 14, meeting dated the 4 January, 1804.
15. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 14, meeting dated the 4 April, 1804.
16. Lokenath Ghose, *Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars etc.*, Part II, Calcutta, 1881, p. 129.
 "In 1802, John Gilchrist and William Hunter obtained sufficient patronage to found the important Hindoostanee Press.... In 1804 when Gilchrist returned to England, Hunter became sole proprietor of the press." David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 116.
- * Gilchrist was elected to the Committee of Papers in October, 1803.
17. Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Heart of Aryavarta*, London, 1925, p. 48.
18. Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 7.
- * Society's Secretary, Dr. Hunter as a "part Proprietor of the Hindoostanee Press" was found to be trying to get the contract of printing of the ninth volume of the Asiatic Researches at the Hindoostanee Press. W. Hunter's letter to the President and Members of the Committee of Papers, Asiatick Society, Calcutta, 2nd August, 1805, Sl. No. 96.
 Dr. Hunter actually won the contract in 1808. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 116.
19. Dr. Wilson's letter dated the 2nd November, 1844 quoted in Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, pp. 43-44.
20. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 2, p. 37, meeting dated the 6 December, 1809.
21. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 38, meeting dated the 7 February, 1810.
22. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 45, meeting dated the 3 April, 1811.
- ** In 1811, Leyden accompanied the Governor General to Java, where, searching eagerly for oriental manuscripts in an ill-ventilated library, in the pestilential month of August, he was attacked with fever, and died in three days, at the age of thirty six.
 N. Chevers, *Surgeons in India—Past and Present*, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XXIII, July—December, 1854, p. 240.

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24. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 70, meeting dated the 7 June, 1815.
25. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 72, meeting dated the 2 August, 1815.
26. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 77, meeting dated the 7 June, 1816.
27. Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 64, meeting dated the 13 November, 1819.
28. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 144, meeting dated the 12 December, 1832.
29. *The Second Report of the Calcutta School Book Society for 1818-19*, Appendix No. XII, p. 57.
30. Rankamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 9 February, 1820, MSS Eur. E301/8 (Misc. Vol.)
31. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 3, p. 88, meeting dated the 17 June, 1820.
32. Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 93, meeting dated the 16 September, 1820.
33. Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 107, meeting dated the 13 April, 1821.
34. Ibid., Vol. 4, 144, meeting dated the 12 December, 1832.
35. Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 113, meeting dated the 14 July, 1821.
36. Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 116, meeting dated the 14 July, 1821.
37. Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 117, meeting dated the 14 July, 1821.

Number of Subscribers.

The 2nd Qr. of 1820 1st July,	1820	: 88	Subscribers @ 16/-
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The 4th Qr. of 1820 1st Jan.	1821	: 88	„ @ 16/-
The 1st Qr. of 1821 1st Apl.	1821	: 84	„ @ 16/-

38. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 3, p. 261, meeting dated the 7 September, 1825 showing the amount collected in 1823 and 1824.
Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 3, p. 301, meeting dated the 6 September, 1826 showing the amount collected from 1.1.1825 to 31.8.1826.
Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 4, p. 5, meeting dated the 4 July, 1827 showing the amount collected from 1.9.1826 to 30.4.1827.
39. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 4, p. 53, meeting dated 3 September, 1828.
40. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 68, meeting dated the 7 January, 1829.
41. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 74, meeting dated the 4 March, 1829.
42. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 77, meeting dated the 6 May, 1829, (activities of Rankamal have been described later).
43. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 78, meeting dated the 6 May, 1829.
44. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 83, meeting dated the 1st July, 1829.
45. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 84, meeting dated the 1st July, 1829.
46. Ibid.
Messrs Mackintosh & Co. were made the Treasurers of the Society in May, 1830.
Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 4, p. 97, meeting dated the 5 May, 1830.
47. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 85 meeting dated the 1st July, 1829.
48. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 101, meeting dated the 7 July, 1830.
49. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 129, meeting dated the 4 July, 1832.
50. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 137, meeting dated the 5 September, 1832.
51. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 112, meeting dated the 9 March, 1831.
- * Committee of Papers :—At the meeting held on the 29th September, 1796, it was resolved to elect annually a committee of papers to conduct the

business of the Society In 1846, the committee of papers was designated as council. Sibadas Chaudhuri ed., *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. I, 1784-1800, Calcutta, 1980, p. 32.

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53. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 145, meeting dated the 12 December, 1832.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 146, meeting dated the 12 December, 1832.
56. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 144, meeting dated the 12 December, 1832.
57. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 148, meeting dated the 19 December, 1832.
58. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 157, meeting dated the 9 January 1833.
59. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 158, meeting dated the 9 January, 1833.
60. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 159, meeting dated the 9 January, 1833.
61. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 162, meeting dated the 20 February, 1833.
62. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 2, meeting dated the 27 March, 1833.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 4, meeting dated the 27 March, 1833.
65. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 2, meeting dated the 27 March, 1833.
66. Ibid.
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68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 2-3, meeting dated the 27 March, 1833.
70. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 3, meeting dated 27 March, 1833.
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77. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 4, meeting dated the 27 March, 1833.
78. Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 11-12, meeting dated the 26 June, 1833.
79. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 12, meeting dated the 26 June, 1833.
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81. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 13, meeting dated the 26 June, 1833.
82. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 14, meeting dated the 31 July, 1833.
83. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 22, meeting dated the 30 January, 1834.
84. Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 22-23, meeting dated the 30 January, 1834.
85. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 47, meeting dated the 14 January, 1835.
86. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 58, meeting dated the 6 May, 1835.
87. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 59, meeting dated the 6 May, 1835.
88. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 61, meeting dated the 3 June, 1835.
89. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 63, meeting dated the 3 June, 1835.
90. Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 62-63, meeting dated the 3 June, 1835.
91. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 63, meeting dated the 3 June, 1835.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 65, meeting dated the 1st July, 1835.
94. Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 65-66, meeting dated the 1st July, 1835.
95. Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 66-67, meeting dated the 1st July, 1835.
96. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 67, meeting dated the 1st July, 1835.
97. Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 68-69, meeting dated the 5 August, 1835.

98. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 69, meeting dated the 5 August, 1835.
99. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 5, pp. 71-73, meeting dated 2 September, 1835.
- * Trevelyan advocated Sir William Jones' mode of expressing Indian characters in the Roman Alphabet. Gilchrist had suggested another method of Romanising Indian languages which was adopted in Governmental Surveys and Records. (For detail consult *the Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*—January—April, 1835, pp. 5-6 and for Dr. S. K. Chatterjee's views on the subject *Journal of the Department of Letters*, Vol. XXVII, C. U., 1935, pp. 13-15). According to Wilson, Trevelyan was another Gilchrist, rather better taught perhaps "but quite as absurd"—Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, pp. 17-18.
100. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 28 November, 1835. MSS Eur. E 301-2.
101. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 5, p. 85, meeting dated the 2 March, 1836.
102. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 88, meeting dated the 6 April, 1836.
103. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 29 June, 1836. MSS Eur. E 301/2.
104. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 5, p. 105, meeting dated the 7 December, 1836.
105. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 118, meeting dated the 7 June, 1837.
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107. Ibid.
108. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 157, meeting dated the 9 January, 1833 ;
Vol. 5, p. 20, meeting dated the 30 January, 1834 ;
Vol. 5, p. 46, meeting dated the 14 January, 1835 ;
Vol. 5, p. 80, meeting dated the 6 January, 1836 ;
Vol. 5, p. 109, meeting dated the 4 January, 1837.
109. Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 59, meeting dated the 10 October, 1838.
110. Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 60, meeting dated the 14 November, 1838.
111. Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 61, meeting dated the 14 November, 1838.
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116. Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 88, meeting dated the 3 July, 1839.
117. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 14 February, 1840, MSS Eur. E 301/3.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid., Calcutta. 18 April, 1840, MSS Eur. E 301/3.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. J.A.S.B., New Series, Vol. IX, Part. I, January-June, 1840, p. 336.
124. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 6 August, 1840, MSS Eur. E 301/3.
125. J.A.S.B., New Series, Vol. IX, Part I, January-June, 1840, p. 215.
126. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 6 August, 1840, MSS Eur. E 301/3.
127. Ibid., Calcutta, 18 September, 1840, MSS Eur. E 301/3.

128. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 15 November, 1840, MSS Eur. E 301/3.
129. Ibid Calcutta, 18 January, 1841, MSS Eur. E 301/4.
130. Ibid Calcutta, 15 October, 1841, MSS Eur. E 301/4.
131. Ibid Calcutta, 12 May, 1842, MSS Eur. E 301/4.
132. Ibid Calcutta, 1 June, 1843, MSS Eur. E 301/5.
133. Ibid Calcutta, 18 January, 1844, MSS Eur. E 301/5.
- * On July 10, 1800 Wellesley proclaimed the formation of a college at Fort William which he hoped would transform inept, self-seeking servants of the East India Company into efficient, devoted civil servants of the British Empire in India. The college was brought into being on November, 24, 1800. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 47.
134. Piddington's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 12 February, 1843, MSS Eur. E 301/5.
135. *J.A.S.B.*, New Series, Vol. 13, Part 2, July-December, 1844, p. lxxxii-lxxxiii.
- * The original letter of Harimohan Sen is available in the *J.A.S.B.*, New Series, Vol. 13, Part 2, July—December, 1844, p. lxxxix-xc.
136. Rajendralal Mitra, *Centenary Review of the Asiatic Society of Bengal from 1784 to 1833, Part I, History of the Society*, Calcutta, 1885, p. 35.
137. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 4, p. 144, meeting dated 12 December, 1832.
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142. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 110, meeting dated the 5 January, 1831.
143. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 146, meeting dated the 12 December, 1832.
144. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 160, meeting dated the 9 January, 1833.
145. N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal, 1793-1848*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1970, p. 100.
146. *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. II, January—December, 1833, pp. 609-613.
- * In his "Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus", Dr. Wilson wrote that *charak puja* was "not directed nor countenanced by any of the authorities of the Hindus, not even by the Tantras." *Asiatic Researches; or Transactions of the Society etc.*, Vol. XVII, 1832, p. 230. Ramkamal read his paper on *charak* before the society in 1829.
147. Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 6, p. 3, meeting dated the 5 July, 1837.
- * Memorandum of Ramkamal on the subject of printing of the *Asiatic Researches* will be found in the Progs. A.S.B., Vol. 5, pp. 2-4, meeting dated the 27 March, 1833.
148. Wilson's letter dated the 2nd November, 1844 quoted in Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 44.

Section II

The Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India.

For the promotion and improvement of agriculture Dr. William Carey published his ideas by sending a questionnaire to all influential citizens of Calcutta. He called a meeting at the Town Hall on the 14th September, 1820. The meeting was attended by seven persons only. Ramkamal Sen was one of the seven pioneers.¹ The meeting formed "The Agricultural Society". Very soon it added "Horticultural" to its title and it became the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India.

Buckland stated that Ramkamal Sen was the "joint-founder (with Dr. Carey)" of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India.²

The manuscript proceedings of the Society from September, 1820 to February, 1821 could not be traced. However, in July, 1821 at a meeting of the Society it was resolved unanimously that "the Native Secretary Ramkumula Sena be requested to undertake the office of the Collector".³ It was, therefore, certain that Ramkamal was elected Native Secretary to the Society prior to July, 1821. From the 18th July, 1821 to the 8th April, 1835, Ramkamal Sen was holding the posts of the Native Secretary and the Collector to the Society ungrudgingly. It was decided at the meeting of the 8th April, 1835 to relieve Ramkamal of the duties of the Collector at his own request on the ground of his being fully occupied by official and other avocations. Dr. Wallich supported the ground mentioned by Ramkamal and only then the office of the Collector was transferred to Bell.⁴

Ramkamal Sen mainly looked into the Society's administrative and financial aspects. He brought in the Society some important Indians like Rasamaya Dutta, Radhakanta Deb, Prasanna Kumar Tagore and others.⁵

An interesting incident took place at the anniversary meeting held in January, 1835. The name of Ramkamal Sen was left out as the Society's Native Secretary. It was at the meeting dated the 8th April, 1835, Low, the Deputy Secretary, and Dr. N. Wallich, the Secretary to the Society, adverted to this accidental omission. They considered it of vital importance, not only that a Native Secretary should be among the Society's officers, but also that it was highly important "the situation should continue to be held by Baboo Ram Comal Sen", who

had "most ably filled it and who from the first commencement of the Society", had proved himself its constant friend and one of the most zealous and indefatigable members. They, therefore, confidently hoped that any uneasy feeling which might have been entertained in consequence of the omission, however unintentional it was, would be entirely removed on its being properly explained to him, and that he would readily resume the duties as the Society's Native Secretary.

It was on the motion of the President unanimously resolved that a letter be addressed to Ramkamal Sen expressive of the Society's regret at any circumstance having occurred to deprive them even temporarily of his valuable services, by which they had benefited during so long a period, and for which they "feel themselves highly obliged to him."⁶ Accordingly a letter was sent to him. The Society also thought it appropriate to furnish him with a copy of this resolution and the preceding minutes.

The Government of Bombay requested the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India for supplying it with an expert opinion on jute. The Society requested Ramkamal Sen to prepare a paper on this subject. Ramkamal read his paper on the 14th January, 1832, which can be regarded as first research paper on the subject. He submitted models of the instruments for spinning it; specimen of the fibres and stalk and seeds of the plant and the cloth manufactured with its thread. He described in detail, the season of cultivation of jute, the process of cultivation, areas where it was cultivated, how the fibres were separated from the stalks, the use of the bitter jute leaves by peasants as medicine, the method of spinning, weaving of jute cloth for gunny bags and the principal stations of manufacture. Malda, Purnea, Natore, Rangpore and Dacca were said to be the principal cultivating and manufacturing centres in those days. Spinning and weaving were done in leisure hours by the peasants. Old decrepit females and children were the workers and whatever they got in return they considered it beneficial. Ramkamal remarked that if the spinning and weaving processes were done in Calcutta, the price of gunny would be more than double that for which it was sold because of the high cost of labour in Calcutta. Greater labour was necessary in spinning and weaving hemp. Therefore, hemp was not used for making gunnies for common purposes. Hemp however was used advantageously in making canvas.⁷

Thomason, the Deputy Secretary to Government, requested Ramkamal Sen and Dr. William Carey through the Society to furnish

information regarding the manufacture of paper. Dr. Carey supplied the information on the basis of experimental observations made by him in making paper in his own establishment at Serampore. The article of Dr. Carey was therefore "confined to one particular kind" and Ramkamal thought it proper to give "all the information we possess or may possibly be able to procure regarding the manufacture of it" in his article. He made an extensive study on the manufacture of paper. He submitted the article on the 31st May, 1832.

Ramkamal wrote that the paper manufactured in the several districts of Bengal and lower Hindustan was used by the Government and people for ordinary purposes. But the paper manufactured in Burdwan excelled all others in quality and durability. It was even better than Arwal and Shahabad varieties called Patna paper. Ramkamal mentioned the principal centres* where paper was manufactured as an article of commerce and which supplied the needs of Bengal and a considerable portion of the Upper Provinces and eastern countries.

Paper of different sizes were called *Rokas* (16 *Roka*, 12 *Roka*, 8 *Roka* etc.) which meant fold or page. Sixteen *Roka* was a sheet which might be folded into eight leaves or 16 pages, octavo; they were likewise called after the names of the places where they were manufactured. For instance they were called as Shahabazaree, Moynonee, Balessoree, Arwalee, Baganiah etc. Ramkamal submitted specimens of paper used by different users. Paper used by school children, by grocers for packing purposes, paper used in fire works, in writing books and documents and in printing books, drafts, bills etc. were shown.

Ramkamal stated that the materials used in making different varieties of paper were more or less the same. But the process of manufacture and the proportions of the materials used explained their difference in quality. Materials used were flex or hemp, jute, old and wornout gunny bags, *pardahs*, sails, old paper, cutting of the edges of paper collected from bookbinders and paper makers, damaged cotton, rope, cables etc. The principal ingredients mixed with these materials were lime and *sajee matee* or carbonate of soda. The material used in sizing was the starch gruel or paste made of fine rice or flour of wheat. The season of manufacturing was between November and March but it could be made when the weather was fair and dry and it was found generally to be inferior in quality to that made in winter and spring. He described the manufacturing processes followed in this country in minutest detail.⁸

His articles on jute and paper would show that Ramkamal was no parochial urbanite. He knew his country, her people, her industry and trade thoroughly. It was all the more significant that he did not fail to notice that the peasants of this country used bitter jute leaves as medicine. It was invariably the result of his intimate knowledge of the life style of the peasantry. Ramkamal was elected Vice-President of the Society twice—once in 1843 and again in 1844.

In the report for the year 1844 the Society noted that among the members who had been taken away from the Society by death, Ramkamal Sen might “perhaps be reckoned as the foremost” whose loss had to be deplored. “The good example he set his countrymen, and that too at a time when they gave little or no attention to any matters connected with the welfare of the country” was deserving of much praise. The report further stated that in his regular attendance at monthly meetings and in the lively interest he took in agricultural pursuits, the Society regretted to find that he stood “almost alone” among the Indian members of the Institution.⁹

It should be noted here that the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India were the two premier research institutions in those days in this country. Ramkamal Sen was intimately connected with both these organisations. Welfare of the people of India was his fundamental motive. It was the spirit of patriotism which inspired him to exert himself to the best of his abilities to achieve that end through these Indo-British Institutions.

Reference Notes

1. *The Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, (a publication of the Society), Calcutta, 1961, p. 10.
2. C. E. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, London, 1906, p. 383.
3. Progs. A.H.S.I., meeting dated the 18 July, 1821.
4. Ibid., dated the 8 April, 1835.
5. Rasamaya Dutta was elected member on a motion of

Ramkamal on the 21. 11. 1821.

Radhakanta Deb

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7. 1. 1822.

Umanandan Tagore

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10. 9. 1823.

Prasanna Kumar Tagore

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19. 11. 1823.
6. Progs. A.H.S.I., meeting dated the 8 April, 1835.
7. *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1838, pp. 91-96.
- * Niala, Sotgong, Manad, Shahabazar, Moynone in the district of Burdwan, Balessore, Bankepur, Arwal Shahar, Harihargunge and Calcutta. In addition to these places, paper was also manufactured in Denajpur, Dacca and Moorshedabad.
8. *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1838, pp. 105-111.
9. *The Report of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India for 1844* quoted in Peary Chand Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, pp. 37-38.

Section III

The Gaudiya Samaj

The first meeting for the purpose of establishing "*Gaudadesiya Samaj*" was held on the 6th Phalgun, 1229 B.S.¹ corresponding to the 16th February, 1823 in the Hindu College, Calcutta. The rich and the learned among the Bengalis of Calcutta assembled at the meeting to consider the ways and means of spreading education among the people of this country and also to examine the feasibility of organising a *Samaj* or a society to achieve their objective. In the proceedings of this meeting names of eminent Bengalis who had attended the meeting appeared. The list contained as many as twenty-two names. Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Tara Chand Chakravorty, Radhakanta Deb, Ramkamal Sen, Gourmohan Vidyalankar, Ramjay Tarkalankar and Kashinath Tarkapanchanan among others attended the meeting.² The proceedings were published in Bengali in the form of a pamphlet. The Samachar Chandrika Press, Calcutta, were the printers of this pamphlet.

On the proposal of Radhakanta Deb, seconded by Umanandan Tagore, Ramkamal Sen was unanimously voted to the chair to conduct the meeting.³

In his introductory speech, Ramkamal observed that the Hindus suffered for lack of unity among them and they had no *Samaj* of their own. He further said that in the prospectus, advantages of having a society and also the disadvantages of not having it, had been clearly written down. He with the permission of the members present requested Gourmohan Vidyalankar to read out the prospectus.⁴

It was stated in the prospectus that public interest could not be served well by any single individual. The Shastras also directed that the people should unite to protect their general interest. Europeans had set examples in this respect. They combined themselves into a society and accomplished even a very hard task with comparative ease. Therefore if a society could be formed by many with a definite purpose no difficulty would be insurmountable.⁵ The prospectus cited some instances to show the benefit likely to be derived from a society like this.

The prospectus glorified India's past, and especially it showed the greatness of the Indian people in comparison with those of other lands.

It also demonstrated their interest in the field of education and in the welfare of the people. It stated that India was the most important part of the world and it was the place where human beings settled in the remote past and developed high standard of civilization. The Greeks, Romans and Muslims who afterwards appeared as important races also admitted that India was the birth place of many great men who were considered as incarnations of God. India had developed successfully Grammar, Vedic Glossary, Astronomy, Drama, Rhetoric and Prosody, Mimansa and Naya Systems of Philosophy, Dharma Shastra, Puranas, Ayurved Shastra, sixty-four varieties of fine arts and eighteen languages. The people of Hindustan were very considerate, powerful, kind, truthful and wise.⁶

For varied reasons, the Hindu empire broke up and fell afterwards. Subsequently the Hindus became unwise, self-conceited, blinded with rage, ignorant, egoistic, subservient and eventually they were dishonoured. But the tragedy was that their disunity and vanity made them totally unconcerned about the real state of their pitiful condition. No attempts were made to mend their ways in order to improve their lot. They did not like to associate themselves with their countrymen. Their disunity and unwillingness to visit different places and countries, lack of knowledge, idleness, hankering after wealth and cheap pleasure were the reasons for their predicament. The prospectus emphasized that the person who belonged to a high caste and whose family had prestige and wealth did not, except under pressing circumstances, go out to meet others. The very little communication they maintained with their countrymen was absolutely due to some material considerations and not due to natural love and affection. In Calcutta society, without self-interest, nobody showed any affection, friendship or kindness to others.⁷ These statements are significant for a study of the society of the rich among the Hindus living in the town of Calcutta in the early nineteenth century.

A person could not be wise and enlightened unless he had occasions to meet people in the meetings and associations where characters, behaviours and principles of reasoning of wise members naturally afforded opportunities to correct his own defects. Since the Hindus preferred to remain in isolation, the qualities, good or bad, which they had inherited since birth remained unaffected till death without any improvement whatsoever.⁸ For the amelioration of the condition of the people it was a necessity to form a *samaj* or a society by the rich and the learned for the purpose of cultivation and encouragement of knowledge.⁹

In the Indian community there was practically no distinction between the learned and the uneducated. Possession of wealth was the only criterion of prestige and honour. A wealthy individual did not feel the necessity of learning. Wealth would automatically bring honour to him and proper education formed no part of his life. As a result most of the opulent persons spent money for the satisfaction of sensuous pleasures which they considered to be the real fulfilment of the aim of human life.¹⁰

The prospectus declared that the genuine desire for knowledge was nearly dead. The learning that would quickly fetch wealth was pursued in fragments and the learner became proud even of his poor knowledge. It showed that learning had become necessary for wealth only and not vice versa. The learned Brahmins were not honourably maintained by the society. Many of them had left their traditional field and after learning the foreign language frantically tried to earn wealth. Opulent people also did not try to impart proper education to their children. In spite of their having sufficient wealth no initiative was taken in respect of education.¹¹

In this world knowledge alone could bring honour, influence and wealth. But that knowledge would be impossible to acquire unless one studied various branches of knowledge, different Shastras both local and foreign. For acquiring knowledge one should study the behaviour of different people and mix with the educated men.¹²

The prospectus stated that money, will and initiative would help one to acquire knowledge. But in this country even if one had money and will, he too for want of good teachers and right books would fail to have good education. The poor had no access to education. To the middle class education was for earning an income only. They learned very little of the language of their own country or of others and immediately when they became capable of earning money, they refrained from learning any more. They could not be really educated. Hence, the rich and the learned should unite and exert themselves for sometime to further the cause of education so that the people might take interest in it.¹³

The prospectus assessed the educative value of the books in different languages such as Bengali, Persian, Arabic etc. available in the country and the difficulties one had to encounter to learn these languages. The assessment was realistic and it suffered from no parochialism.

The books written in Bengali by Kashidas (Kashiram Dās) only helped one to acquire prejudices. They only rendered disservice instead of being useful.¹⁴

Good books in Persian were not easily available. The books in that language which could be procured without difficulty were mainly related to history, wars, fables or legends. By reading them one could acquire a little knowledge about judicial matters but they would not broaden his mind or enrich his knowledge. To an immature mind, they could have harmful effects.¹⁵

The Arabic language was considered highly difficult but it had varieties of good books. The absence of a good dictionary in the language of this country and the dearth of books and teachers made it difficult to learn the Arabic language.¹⁶

The English language was more difficult. Its grammar and the import of its words were hard to learn. Good translations from English into Bengali were nearly non-existent. Good dictionary and good teachers were also not available. The knowledge of that language which usually the writers or clerks acquired was merely the knowledge of the alphabet, numbers or a few words and nothing more. It did not help them to educate themselves.¹⁷

Serious study for many years was necessary to acquire knowledge in Sanskrit Shastras. Learned scholars in Sanskrit were rare. There were people who had devoted many years to learning Sanskrit but being disgusted left it.¹⁸

It was suggested therefore that the wise men of the society should unite and translate into Bengali if necessary with the assistance of *Pundits*, the best books, both local and foreign, and publish them in the names of the translators or compilers. In this way books on various branches of knowledge could be prepared and published without any hindrance.¹⁹

Without criticism no individual was capable of correcting himself. In a country where press and publications were limited, bad behaviour, obnoxious customs and prejudices were likely to increase unabated.²⁰

The prospectus stated that it was the business of the Government to educate the people. But in absence of that the religious, wise and opulent people should strive to achieve this end unitedly. But in this country usually nobody gave wise counsel. Even when somebody expressed his opinion it was generally of the nature of calumny and not for showing the correct path.²¹

Protection of self and family was the law of the animal world. It was the duty of the human beings to protect their countrymen and

to do something for the welfare and well-being of their own race but in the society of this country the attitude of the people was just the reverse and without crude self-interest nobody took any initiative to help others.²²

The prospectus also referred to the activities of the Christian missionaries. They had been distributing pamphlets condemning Hindu practices among the people. They were converting the people belonging to the lowest caste of the Hindus to Christianity. It was considered necessary to counteract missionary efforts unitedly.²³

After some discussions, the meeting resolved to form "*Gaudiya Samaj*" or a society of "*Gaudadesiya bhadralokes*" for pursuit of knowledge and for considering various aspects of manners, customs etc. of the Indian people. The *Samaj* had the following important points in its programme :

1. The learned and the respected Indians would meet occasionally at the appointed date and time.
2. The *Samaj* would translate the best and the most useful books of different languages into Bengali and publish them.
3. The *Samaj* would enquire into the prevailing social prejudices and bad customs and try to eradicate them. On these topics, it would publish pamphlets in Bengali and English.
4. The *Samaj* would collect books and build up a public library.
5. Scientific instruments would be procured by the *Samaj* for building up a laboratory.²⁴
6. The *Samaj* would construct a house of its own as and when sufficient fund would accumulate and establish schools under it for the spread of education in different branches of knowledge.²⁵

On the proposal of Radhakanta Deb, seconded by Dwarkanath Tagore and Umanandan Tagore, Ramkamal Sen was elected Secretary to the *Samaj*. Ramkamal Sen however, proposed that it would be good to elect Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Secretary in his place.²⁶ On hearing Ramkamal the meeting finally decided that Ramkamal and Prasanna Kumar both should be the Secretaries to the *Gaudiya Samaj*.²⁷

In the second meeting of the *Gaudiya Samaj*, held on the 23rd March, 1823, an executive committee was formed with the following persons :—

Ladlymohan Tagore, Radhamadhab Banerjee, Kashikanto Ghosal, Chandra Kumar Tagore, Bhabanicharan Banerjee.

Dwarkanath Tagore, Ramjay Tarkalankar, Radhakanta Deb, Tarinicharan Mitra and Kashinath Mullik.²⁸

The prospectus was read again by Bhabanicharan Banerjee at the request of Ramkamal Sen. Then some discussions followed. Ramkamal Sen said that to fulfil the objects of the *Samaj* money would be required and the *Samaj* was brought into being for the welfare of the country. He requested the members to subscribe to the fund of the *Samaj*. Accordingly a sum of Rs. 2151/- was collected.²⁹

The third meeting of the *Gaudiya Samaj* was held on the 5th May, 1823 corresponding to 23rd Baisakh, 1230 B.S. Kashikanta Ghoshal* read out a portion of 'Byabaharmukur'—a book written by him in Bengali.³⁰

The fourth meeting of the *Samaj* was held on the 14th September, 1823 (30th Bhadra, 1230 B.S.) at the residence of Chandra Kumar Tagore³¹ and the fifth on the 8th December, 1823 (23rd Agrahayan, 1230 B.S.) at the residence of Kalisankar Ghosal.³² The *Samachar Darpan* reported last on *Gaudiya Samaj* on the 3rd July, 1824. It had been stated in that report that a meeting of the *Samaj* was held on the 26th June, 1824 (14th Asarh, 1231 B.S.).³³

The *Gaudiya Samaj* was the first society or *Samaj*, though short-lived, organised chiefly by the Bengali elite of Calcutta on the European model for the purpose of educating the people and eradicating social prejudices.

The prospectus gave a very clear picture of the life-style of aristocrats of the Bengali society. The picture was drawn by them and in fact they themselves were criticizing their habits, manners, customs etc. with an honest intention to get over the weaknesses from which their society had been suffering. It was a kind of honest confession of the Bengali aristocracy of Calcutta, and as such, it was a document of importance.

The meetings, including the first one, were attended not only by the aristocracy of wealth but also by the educated members of the Bengali community of Calcutta. They represented the aristocracy of intellect. Therefore, through *Gaudiya Samaj* an effort for the first time was made to unite the aristocracy of wealth and the aristocracy of intellect together, for public good.

Ramkamal Sen, a man of moderate means, had been able by 1823 to establish himself as an important literary man of the Bengali community and as such he was chosen to be the proper person to preside over the meeting which formally gave birth to *Gaudiya Samaj*, a society devoted primarily to the cause of education.

The most significant point to be noted was that the basic object of the *Samaj* was to make all possible exertions to spread education including science and technology through the medium of Bengali and for that purpose its efforts were directed to translate useful books belonging to different languages into Bengali, the language of the masses of Bengal. It was therefore, the first conscious attempt of the Bengali elite to take into consideration the question of mass education as distinguished from the education imparted in the Hindu College, an institution organised by them, which was elitist in character. Ram Mohan Roy did not associate himself directly with this organisation but his followers like Dwarkanath, Prasanna Kumar and Tarachand whole-heartedly co-operated with Bhabanicharan, Radhakanta, Ramkamal and others to organise this society. When Radhakanta proposed the name of Ramkamal for the Secretaryship of the *Samaj*, it was Dwarkanath who came forward to second the proposal. Similarly it was Ramkamal who was eager to have Prasanna Kumar as the Secretary to the *Samaj*. Finally, however, both Prasanna Kumar and Ramkamal were directed to shoulder the burden of Secretaryship.

The popular contention that in the early years of the nineteenth century the Calcutta elite were broadly divided into two opposite *dals* or groups, one led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the other by Radhakanta Deb is falsified by the activities of the *Gaudiya Samaj*. As a matter of fact *dals* of the nineteenth century Bengal differed on some matters and agreed on others. The story of the *Gaudiya Samaj* goes a long way to establish this truth.

Reference Notes

1. *Gaudadesiya Samaj Samsthapanartha Pratham Sabhar* Bibaran, Calcutta, the 6 Phalgun, 1229 B.S., Title page.
2. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
3. Ibid., pp. 3-4.
4. Ibid., p. 5.
5. Ibid., p. 6.
6. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
7. Ibid., pp. 8-10.
8. Ibid., p. 11.
9. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
10. Ibid., p. 13.
11. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
12. Ibid., p. 15.

13. *Goudadesiya Samaj Samsthapanartha Pratham Sabhar Bibaran*, Calcutta, the 6 Phalgun, 1229 B.S., pp. 15-16.
14. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
15. Ibid., p. 17.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
18. Ibid., p. 18.
19. Ibid., p. 19.
20. Ibid., pp. 19-20.
21. Ibid., p. 20.
22. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
23. Ibid., pp. 22-25.
24. Ibid., p. 28.
25. Ibid.
26. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha*, 3rd ed., Vol. I, 1377 B.S., p. 9.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 11.
29. Ibid., p. 10.
- * J. C. Bagal in his article on *Gaudiya Samaj* suggested that Kalisankar Ghosal was the author of Byabaharmukur. J. C. Bagal, *Gaudiya Samaj, Sahitya Parisad Patrika*, Vol. 60, No. 1, 1360 B.S., p. 21.
But his name could not be found in the printed proceedings of the first meeting. In the *Samachar Darpan* his name appeared only in the proceedings of the fifth meeting held on the 8th December, 1823.
The Samachar Darpan reported that Byabahar Mukur was written by Kashikanta Ghosal. Kashikanta was one of the founder members of the *Samaj*.
30. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha*, 3rd ed., Vol. I, 1377 B.S., p. 11.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 11.
33. Ibid., p. 12.

Ramkamal's Major Employments

Section I

Ramkamal in the Calcutta Mint

In the opening years of the nineteenth century, the Mint establishment of the East India Company at Calcutta was not a well-managed organisation. From the proceedings of the Mint Committee it would appear that the Mint administration was rather slack.

The Governor General in Council exercised control and conducted the business of the Mint through a committee known as the Mint Committee. At the head of the Mint there was a Mint Master. The assay office was in the charge of an Assay Master who was directly appointed by the Court of Directors. He had a European Assistant to help him in his scientific work. To the post of Foreman in the workshop Europeans only were appointed. The bullion office was in the charge of a Bullion Keeper who was invariably an Indian. There was an accounts office where the accounts of the Mint were kept in English. Both Europeans and Indians used to work in that office. The Mint Master however, as a rule was "alone responsible to Government for the Bullion under his charge."¹ For the safety of the Mint Master, he used to take adequate security from the Bullion Keeper. Proper securities were also taken from those Indian workers who in course of their work had any connection with the bullion, coins, cash etc. irrespective of the fact whether they worked in the bullion office or in the workshop. They had to deposit Company's papers with the Bullion Keeper as securities for the honest discharge of their duties. Those papers were endorsed to the Mint Master and the Bullion Keeper conjointly.²

"The Mint Committee anterior to 1814" did not appear to have exercised sufficient control over the accounts of the Mint unless they became the subject of a special investigation. The consequence was that large sums were abstracted from the Mint, "for the benefit of individuals" and ultimately in "1809/10" a heavy loss was sustained, "amounting to nearly 2 lacs of Rupees".³

Dr. Wilson arrived in India in 1808 and was appointed Assistant to the Assay Master by the Court of Directors. In 1812 he was made the Assay Master of the Mint. On the 3rd June, 1814, the duty of the Secretary to the Mint Committee was allotted to him and when the new Mint was ordered to be erected he was further made Junior Member and Secretary of the Committee appointed to superintend its construction and to check the disbursement and accounts of that work.⁴

Since his assumption of office of the Secretary to the Mint Committee, a number of subjects had been brought under the Committee's investigation. The Mint Annual Balances had been personally verified by the Mint Committee. The quarterly reports of the Civil Auditor, with the Mint monthly accounts and vouchers were regularly submitted to their verification and the quarterly abstracts recorded. Annual abstract statements of the amount of coinage, charges and losses furnished by the Mint Master were submitted to the Committee and recorded in their office. In addition to these, the review of the Mint proceedings in 1818 for 20 years, the alteration of the coinage, the state of the currency in the Western Provinces, the amount of bullion export and import, the abolition of the Benares and Furruckabad Mints, the valuation of the Ava Treasures and the arrangements connected with the new Mint were some of the enquiries in which the Committee had been engaged.⁵

It would appear that the Government was trying through the Mint Committee to regularise the activities of the Mint. The supervision of the establishment was made stricter. Vigilant though the Mint Committee was, even then, cases of abstraction of precious metals from the Mint could not be avoided altogether. In July, 1825 a theft was committed in the bullion office. Madan Mohan Ghose * was then the Bullion Keeper of the Mint. On July 29, 1825, Saturday, 4007-4-0 sicca weight of gold standard ingots were delivered to Roopchand Pal and Lokenath Bose joint Laminators, for laminating and cutting blanks etc. After necessary operations they came to the Bullion office at about 5 o' clock in the evening of the same day to have the blanks and scissel weighed and returned. But it was then too late. Nimai Charan Chatterjee, the *Aumeen*, attached to that department, was engaged in superintending the weighings and delivery of silver scissel. The gold blanks and scissels so brought were not placed in the bullion office in Aumeen's presence agreeable to the rules. They were deposited in a chest at the bullion office by Roopchand Pal accompanied by Rammohun Day, a workman of

the Laminating Department, deputed by the *Aumeen* who had respectively locked it with their keys. The former, having delivered his key to Lokenath, went home and the latter to Nimaicharan Chatterjee, the *Aumeen*. The two individuals first named so went away merely locking up the chest but did not see it sealed in their presence as usual in such cases. The chest containing the gold blanks and scissel was afterwards sealed by Shaikh Mitto, a servant belonging to the Laminating Department together with Harekrishna Daftari at 7 in the evening.

On Monday, the 31st, the bullion office was opened as usual at day break. At 10 o' clock in the morning, at the time of opening the chest nothing unusual was detected. But at the time of weighing the contents of the bags, it was discovered that the same were short of sicca weight 186-15-9.

On the 3rd August following only 77 pieces of gold blanks weighing sicca weight 83-9-0 were found in a bag under platform at the bullion office and remaining quantity of difference viz. sicca weight 103-6-9 was not found.⁶ The then Mint Master John Trotter brought this to the notice of the Mint Committee on the 13th August, 1825. On this occasion he pointed out to the Committee the very insufficient manner by which the 'head native officer' (Bullion Keeper) Madan Mohan Ghose was bound to Government and the Mint Master by his bond of the 19th October, 1821.⁷

In it he was only responsible for the delivery of monies etc. which might have been committed to or received into his care or of his servants. The Mint Master explained to the Committee that the bond was unsatisfactory, for it might so happen that the intrinsic value of coins might bear a premium in the *Bazar*, and under the bond the Government could only sue for standard value in coin. According to the Mint Master therefore, an encouragement was thus virtually held out to dishonesty on the part of the Bullion Keeper.⁸

To correct this evil and still more essentially to check the commission of theft which 'too often' occurred in the mint, he proposed to the Committee that the Bullion Keeper should be subjected in addition to his covenant to the payment of a penalty of 25 percent on all losses and deficiencies and that he should be required to deposit with his bond a collateral security in company's paper which would at-once be tangible on the occasion of any delinquency of the present nature.⁹

On the 2nd September, 1825, the Mint Committee decided that the Committee could have no objection to the construction of the

bond in any terms the Company's Law Officers might think most likely to answer their purpose.¹⁰

On the 2nd January, 1826 the Government transferred John Trotter from the situation of the Mint Master of the Calcutta Mint. Robert Saunders was appointed to that office¹¹ and he took over the charge of the Department from Trotter on the 10th February 1826.¹²

On the 8th June, 1826, Saunders sought the advice of the Mint Committee for deciding as to the person who should be asked to make good the loss. The Bullion Keeper by the terms of his agreement with the Government and the Mint Master was responsible for all bullion in the progress of coinage as well as that under his more immediate charge but for his security as well that of the Government the individuals in charge of the Laminating, Adjusting and other Departments were obliged to make deposits which were liable to be forfeited in the event of their falling into balance. It appeared to have been customary to have the Government papers thus deposited endorsed to the Mint Master and the consequence was that the Bullion Keeper could not, without the assistance of the Mint Master do anything with those papers. Each case of balance had to be investigated by the Mint Master who in fact decided upon whom the loss should fall.

In the present instance no security appeared to have been taken from Roopchand Pal and Lokenath Bose, who were in charge of the Laminating Department. Saunders drew the attention of the Committee to the reasons assigned by Madan Mohan Ghose, the Bullion Keeper for the omission.¹³ The Bullion Keeper informed him that Roopchand Pal was recommended by the late Mint Master, Trotter and Lokenath Bose by Ross, the Foreman of the Mint. They were introduced to the office by those officers without allowing Ghose sufficient time to take their security before they had taken charge of their offices. Madan Mohan Ghose regularly demanded an adequate deposit from them. At last they offered to furnish security to the amount of Rs. 4,000/-. Ghose was authorised to accept the same. "This was, however, kept up in negotiation until the gold was stolen which terminated their contract".¹⁴ Saunders, therefore, instead of calling upon Madan Mohan Ghose to replace the amount deficient thought it proper that the gold in question, though lodged in a box, would be considered as under the joint charge of the Laminators and Nimaicharan Chatterjee, the *Aumeen*. Both the parties were guilty to some degree of carelessness in quitting the room leaving the *Duftari* to seal the box by which an opportunity was afforded of which he

probably availed himself of removing the gold *Mohurs* before he affixed the seals. The Aumeen could only be regarded as the representative of the Bullion Keeper whom Saunders proposed to call upon to pay one half of the amount deficient and demanded payment of the other half from Roopchand Pal and Loknath Bose, who were jointly in charge of the Laminating Department at the time the theft was committed.¹⁵

Regarding the insufficiency of the security given by Madan Mohan Ghose, Saunders confirmed the opinion of Trotter. "Two individuals of reputed wealth Dwarkanath Thakoor and Gopenath Chowdree" had executed a bond to be responsible to the extent of two lakhs of Rupees to indemnify the Company and the Mint Master for any lapse they might sustain by reason of the neglect, failure, misconduct etc. of the Bullion Keeper, Madan Mohan Ghose or of those employed under him.¹⁶

Saunders apprehended that in consequence of the security being collateral only, the whole onus of proving the loss would necessarily fall upon the Government and the Mint Master in the event of the Bullion Keeper absconding and a balance appearing against him. If the matter was submitted to the decision of a court of law technical objections might be urged and the claim be rejected. It had also been suggested to him that in a civil action "a question might arise whether or not the salary granted to the Bullion Keeper was a fair consideration for the responsibility incurred by the individual holding that appointment".¹⁷ The Mint accounts were "from their nature far from simple" and appeared to be peculiarly liable to the "technical objections of a court of law." Moreover, many of them being accounts kept by the Bullion Keeper with the different departments and necessarily under his charge, in the event of his absconding he would probably falsify or make way with them. Time too would elapse before the balance could be verified at the scale and the responsibility fixed and the operations of the Mint must be suspended during the interval which might be attended with greater public inconvenience.¹⁸

The obvious remedy for this was to require the Bullion Keeper to deposit Government paper the amount of which being to all intents and purposes his own. He would have no interest in absconding so long as the balance did not exceed the value of his deposit. Until, however, some increase was made in the allowance of the Bullion Keeper, it was quite "out of the question to expect him to furnish

security of that description". His Salary was Rs. 80/- per month*, the duties of his situation were laborious requiring his constant daily attendance from an early hour in the morning until frequently very late at night. He was liable to be subjected to fines bearing no comparison with the amount of his allowances, for the blunders or misfortunes of others who worked under him.¹⁹

Saunders stated that the *Dewan* at the Treasury furnished security of Government paper equal to three lakhs of Rupees and the *Dewan* of the Bank of Bengal one lakh in Rupees and two lakhs in collateral securities. The allowances of the former were Rupees 400 per month and those of the latter might be estimated at about the same amount. In fixing the allowances of those officers on so respectable a footing, the Government doubtless took into consideration the temptations to which they were exposed. Saunders desired that the same consideration would be shown in revising the scales of allowances to be drawn by the Bullion Keeper of the Mint. He suggested that if the Bullion Keeper lodged a deposit of Company's paper to the extent of one lakh of Rupees, in addition to the collateral security furnished by him, "an addition of 320 rupees per month" to his allowances might "not be considered too great".²⁰

The Mint Committee addressed a letter to the Governor General-in-Council on the 29th July, 1826 on this subject. They held that the Bullion Keeper was "undoubtedly accountable for the stolen property." There was a great neglect on his part and it was but just that the "Bullion Keeper should suffer the penalty for a want of vigilance in his own department". Trotter and Saunders, both of them recommended that the Bullion Keeper should deposit Company's papers either in place of or in addition to the collateral security already given. The Committee stated that the question of giving security by the Bullion Keeper was a question between the Bullion Keeper and the Mint Master, and not between the former and the Government. But there could "be no objection to the security of Company's paper and it might be expedient to demand it in addition to the collateral security now given". In that case, the Committee opined that it would "be necessary to give the Bullion Keeper a more liberal allowance". The Committee felt that his salary Rupees 80/- a month was "wholly inadequate to his duties and responsibility" and they, therefore, recommended that the salary of the Bullion Keeper should "be raised to the sum of 250 Rupees" and that in consequence he should "deposit with the Mint Master in addition to the present security, Company's paper to the amount of 50,000 Rupees".²¹

The Government made it clear that if the Mint Master deemed it expedient there could of course be no objection to his requiring a deposit of Government paper in addition to the usual security. The Government approved and authorized the salary of the Bullion Keeper being fixed at Rs. 250/- per month. It would, however, rest in the direction of the Mint Master to enforce the condition of the deposit, if he thought it necessary.²²

H. T. Prinsep, Acting Secretary to the Government in a letter dated the 16th November, 1826, informed the Mint Committee that the Government held Trotter, the late Mint Master, answerable for the loss in the first instance, leaving him to settle afterwards with the Bullion Keeper. The Civil Auditor was informed of the resolution of the Government in order that the amount for which Trotter had been declared responsible might be realized by "retrenchment from his salary."²³

In accordance with the broad policy laid down by the Committee and confirmed by the Government, Saunders called upon Madan Mohan Ghose to deposit Government papers equal in value to Rs. 50,000/- in addition to the collateral security which he had furnished when appointed to the office. After much delay Madan Mohan Ghose expressed his inability to comply with Saunders' requisition.²⁴

Under the circumstances it became necessary for him to nominate for the sanction of the Committee and of the Government another person to the situation of Bullion Keeper. Saunders had the greatest difficulty in finding any one willing to undertake the duties of Bullion Keeper on the conditions required, and although the probability of the office becoming vacant, had been very generally known, two individuals only had been recommended to him or offered themselves for the situation. One of them subsequently withdrew, on ascertaining the nature of the duties, and the extent of the responsibility and the other, he had reason to believe, would accept it in the hope that hereafter the allowances might be increased, though of course he had avoided holding out to him anything like a promise that such would be the case.²⁵

Saunders regretted that his recommendation to have the allowances of the office placed on a footing of equality with those of the Treasurers of the General Treasury, and the Bank of Bengal, whose duties he still felt, were neither so laborious nor responsible as those of the Bullion Keeper, did not meet with the support of the Mint Committee, and nothing but the fear of being considered unfor-

fortunate, prevented him again from urging the measure as one of policy and justice. Saunders then showed that the full amount of the Bullion Keeper's allowances would be absorbed in payment of interest, if he had to borrow the Government paper required to be deposited paying interest for it at the rate of 12 percent per annum, a rate not considered more than sufficient to cover the risk, as the paper would be to all intents and purposes transferred, as money lent would be, from the control of the lender.* The person he proposed for the situation was Ramkamal Sen who had for some time past held the situation of Assistant to the Secretary to the General Committee of Public Instruction. The value of his property might be estimated, at about two lakhs of Rupees. He would furnish collateral security to the extent required and would endorse over to Saunders as Mint Master, Government papers to the value of Rs. 50,000/- to be held in deposit, to answer any demands that might be made upon him for the non-execution of the terms of his agreement. The bond would be drawn out conformably with the tenor of that executed by the Bullion Keeper.²⁶

Ramkamal Sen was a man of property and of respectable character. The Mint Committee, therefore, fully concurred in his nomination.²⁷ On March 8, 1827 the Government sanctioned the appointment of Ramkamal Sen as Bullion Keeper in the Mint of Calcutta, on a salary of sicca Rs. 250/- per month, on his furnishing the required security.²⁸

Ramkamal Sen assumed charge of the office of Bullion Keeper of the Calcutta Mint on the 31st March, 1827. A receipt was granted by him to the late Bullion Keeper, Madan Mohan Ghose for the balance in the Mint at that date amounting to Sicca Rupees 6,40,223-14-10.²⁹ The Mint Master informed the Committee on the 30th April, 1827 that the bond to be executed by the new Bullion Keeper, Ramkamal Sen and his securities was being prepared by the Company's Attorney and when the draft would be forwarded to him, he would in turn submit it for the approval of the Committee.³⁰ The Company's Attorney forwarded the draft bond to the Mint Master on the 6th July. The draft got the approval of the Advocate General. It had been shown to Ramkamal Sen who suggested that "the alteration inserted in pencil in the margin should be made in it." The only one of any importance was that which provided for the necessity of his resignation being accepted within the limited period after it was tendered, and that after the balance of the Mint had been taken on his removal no greater amount of his deposit should be retained than

would be sufficient to cover any demand disputed or acknowledged, which might then exist against him.

The Mint Master recommended that the alterations and additions might be inserted in the bond. Ramkamal endorsed to Saunders, as the Mint Master, the Government paper described in the draft.³¹

Ramkamal in January, 1841 wrote to Dr. Wilson about the circumstances which led to his appointment to the post of Bullion Keeper of the Calcutta Mint. He stated that the situation was not given to him by Saunders as a matter of favour as Dr. Wilson would recollect. "Dwarkanath Tagore's brother did not accept it, and it was found difficult to get anybody to give a deposit of Rs. 50,000/-". It was Ramkamal who came forward with the deposit and as the situation could no longer remain without being filled up, it was conferred on him. He accepted "the salary Rs. 250 under an expectation of an increase". He in fact "got nothing more in the Mint than that salary".³²

During the period Ramkamal was working in the Mint, the Indian establishment consisted of two classes—first those employed in the receipt and issue of bullion and coin, looking after security and custody, the preparation of English accounts of the same whilst in progress of coinage, and also in maintaining records of the work people ; secondly, others employed in the several departments of the Mint. Ramkamal Sen being the Chief Indian Officer of the Mint had to perform various duties. Briefly the following were the duties and responsibilities he had to shoulder in the Mint :—

A. All bullion or coins whether deposited in the strong rooms attached to the bullion office or remaining in the departments whilst in progress of coinage (with the exception of the melting department when conducted by a European Superintendent) were under his joint charge, seal and key. He was to nominate for the approval of the Mint Master, a Deputy Bullion Keeper and the Indian officers employed as assistants or accountants in the bullion room, and also the Superintendents or *Aumeens*, weighmen and others employed in the custody and weighment of the bullion or coin whilst in progress of coinage, taking adequate security from them to be responsible to him for any difference that might occur over and above the losses sustained by the operations connected with the coinage.³³

B. He was to be present in the bullion room during office hours. He was to keep accounts of the description and weight of each parcel of bullion or coin whether public or private received there or

transferred to the melting department and of the coin sent to the General Treasury or elsewhere.³⁴

C. He was to examine the accounts kept by the Superintendents or *Aumeens* in the several departments of the Mint, and attest them with his signature previous to their being signed by the Mint Master.³⁵

D. He had to keep an account of the cash transactions of the Mint and pay all bills ordered for payment by the Mint Master and countersign all challans or passes for coin, bullion etc. leaving the Mint.³⁶

E. He should receive orders from the Mint Master and conform to such instructions as he might from time to time receive either verbally or in writing from that officer. He was, however, assisted by a Deputy Bullion Keeper and Cash Keeper and an establishment of Indian *Mohorees* in the performance of his various duties.³⁷

There was not even a single case of theft during the period Ramkamal had been in the Mint. Ramkamal tendered his resignation of the office of the Bullion Keeper of the Calcutta Mint on the 11th November, 1832. Ramkamal stated in his letter of resignation that having been "nominated *Khajanchee* of the Bank of Bengal" he wanted to resign his office as Bullion Keeper of the Calcutta Mint. The accounts of the bullion in the Mint and the necessary arrangements for the transfer to his successor would be duly made whenever his resignation would be accepted. He had been six years in the Mint and during this period, he hoped his services had been found satisfactory. He expressed sincere thanks to Saunders, the Mint Master for the support, attention and liberal means, he had the goodness to give him in the discharge of his duties, and the kindness he had ever received from him.³⁸

On the 13th November, 1832, Saunders submitted for information and orders of the Mint Committee and of the Government, the letter dated the 11th November, 1832 from Ramkamal Sen tendering his resignation of the situation of the Bullion Keeper at the Calcutta Mint. The Mint Master had "much satisfaction in bearing testimony to the attention and zeal invariably evinced by him in the performance of the very responsible duties attached to the office of the Bullion Keeper" during the six years Ramkamal had acted under him in the Mint.³⁹

Ramkamal was a successful Bullion Keeper. He was able to come out of the Mint with a brilliant record. The Mint Master was so much impressed by his industry, honesty and dedication that he

immediately proposed to nominate Harimohan Sen, the Deputy Bullion Keeper and the eldest son of Ramkamal Sen to succeed to the vacant office. Harimohan had officiated as Deputy Bullion Keeper for a period of four years under his father Ramkamal and from his education, character and acquaintance with the nature of the duties, was fully qualified for the situation. In addition to Madan Mohan Sen who was the security for Ramkamal Sen, Ramkamal himself proposed to be joint security for his son. Harimohan himself would execute the usual bond and would deposit Government paper to the value of Rs. 50,000/- as required by the rules of the Mint, after the bullion had been weighed and the joint charge of it made over to him by his father Ramkamal Sen.⁴⁰

Mint Master's recommendation was forwarded to the Government by the Mint Committee on the 16th November, 1832⁴¹. The nomination of Harimohan Sen to the situation of the Bullion Keeper in the Mint was sanctioned by the Government on the 20th November 1832.⁴²

Ramkamal Sen's official connection with the Mint ended in November, 1832. Very unfortunately attempts were made by a European official of the Mint to put him to some difficulties in 1840.

Ramkamal wrote to Dr. Wilson on the subject of Mint in November, 1835 that Captain Forbes had been appointed the Mint Master. John Curnin had gone to England and he would be "coming to live in the Mint".⁴³ In April, 1840 Ramkamal stated that in the Mint Curnin was said to be doing "much mischief". He opined that Curnin was as much unfit as unpopular for the important office he held "particulary the Secretariship of the Mint Committee" which should not be united with the assay office and given to a person like him. Ramkamal was afraid if his proceedings were allowed to go on in the style he had adopted, the Mint would revert to the state from which Dr. Wilson had changed it. He stated that Major Forbes was not equal to the duties of the Mint Master and the Mint Committee was weak. He apprehended that there would be reference to catch the eyes of the Court of Directors and Dr. Wilson might be consulted.⁴⁴

The justification of giving this information to Dr. Wilson would not be very far to seek. The Mint establishment improved a lot during the period of Dr. Wilson. Ramkamal Sen was his co-labourer and he had a definite role to play in bringing about changes to tone up the administration so much desired by the Mint Committee and the Government. Efficiency and honesty were restored. It would naturally be shocking to Ramkamal to see the establishment going back again to its former state. It was only because of that reason

he was so much critical about the activities of the important officials of the said organisation.

During the absence of James Prinsep, John Curnin was made the Acting Assay Master of the Calcutta Mint. In consequence of the death of James Prinsep in England the Court of Directors appointed him, Assay Master on the 29th April, 1840.⁴⁵

In the month of May, 1840 a case of gold deficiency was discovered in the assay office. The Assay Master discovered a deficiency of gold amounting to 78 *tolas* and 10 *annas* valued at Rupees 991/-, in a quantity of 213 *tolas* of unrefined gold which formed the balance of a mass of unrefined gold containing 7590 *tolas* of standard gold received by him in February, 1839 from the Mint for the purpose of refining. The refining of this gold was effected by the assay office and in the month of March the whole was returned with the exception of 213 *tolas*. This portion had been found refractory. John Curnin pointed out that on the 18th March, 1839 he weighed the 213 *tolas* of refractory drops himself and kept the dish containing them in a chest in the laboratory. On the 28th March, he reported to the Mint Committee that he returned all except 184 *tolas* of standard gold which he expected to recover from the 213 *tolas* of refractory drops. No attempts to refine the refractory gold were made until the end of May, 1840. The refractory drops were allowed to remain in the chest for a period of 13 or 14 months.⁴⁶

W. Greenway, Assistant to the Assay Master, was employed to refine the gold by the Assay Master during the days of the 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th of May, 1840. On the 26th Greenway had conversation with Curnin respecting the weight of the unrefined gold. Greenway told him that the unrefined gold weighed only 130 *tolas* 6 *annas* instead of 213 *tolas*.⁴⁷

Curnin in a letter dated the 27th May, 1840 informed Greenway that he would hold Greenway responsible for the deficiency of gold and that the chest in which the gold was kept was never opened but by Greenway or by his orders. He asked him to restore the stolen quantity otherwise he would be under the necessity of bringing the whole affair to the notice of the Mint Committee.⁴⁸

Greenway replied to Curnin's note very properly by urging the necessity of avoiding all private communications in so serious a matter and by calling for an immediate public and strict investigation to his conduct. He also requested Curnin that his reply to him might be recorded in the proceedings of the Office.⁴⁹

The Mint Committee met on several dates in the month of June to investigate into the matter and on the basis of their findings they

submitted their report to the Governor General, Governor of Bengal on the 3rd July, 1840.

The Mint Committee proposed to themselves in the first place to enquire when the gold was abstracted and how it could have been abstracted without immediate detection by the responsible Assay Master. The Committee also decided to enquire into the grounds for charging Greenway with the deficiency, and also into Greenway's general reputation.⁵⁰

Curnin announced to Greenway in a letter dated the 1st June, 1840 that his services at the assay office were dispensed with. The Mint Committee directed Curnin in his capacity of the Committee's Secretary to acquaint Greenway that his suspension from office had not emanated from the Committee and that the Committee allowed him time to prepare his defence. The Committee visited the apartment where the assays were conducted and the laboratory attached to it.⁵¹

On the 4th of June, the Committee recorded their opinion with regret that a total want of prudence and vigilance on the part of the Assay Master characterised the management of his responsibility. There was no system of check but on the contrary a general and indiscriminate confidence was reposed by the Master in his subordinate officers. Curnin being asked by the Committee whether he proposed to charge Greenway with abstracting the missing gold, answered that he had no other way of accounting for the deficiency than that it occurred either through Greenway's dishonesty or remissness. With respect to Greenway, the Committee found no reason to suspect him of any misconduct in the case of the gold deficiency. In the opinion of the Committee, Greenway took all the precaution in his power to keep the gold in the place in which it had been deposited by Curnin.⁵²

The Committee was gratified at their meeting of the 13th June, when Curnin intimated to the Committee that in consequence of what had come out in evidence before them, it was his intention to withdraw all charges of a criminal nature against Greenway and to restore him to office.⁵³

The Committee then referred to the information given to them by Harimohan Sen, the Bullion Keeper of the Mint and to the agreement which the Committee made with him. The Committee hoped that Harimohan's enquiries would lead to the discovery of the parties who stole the gold from the assay office.⁵⁴

Curnin, however, went to the police with a letter addressed by himself to the Magistrate differing on a most material point from the

directions given by the Committee, and on that particular point on which the Committee intended to be gaurded viz., in respect to the pledge which the Committee had made to Harimohan Sen.⁵⁵ *

On the 16th of June, 1840 the Committee was compelled to record their dissatisfaction with Curnin's conduct. They held Curnin "personally, accountable for the value of the gold" that had been stolen. But in consideration of the zeal employed by Curnin in refining the gold which was urgently needed by the Government the Committee requested the Government to forego the claim against him. Curnin, however, placed the Committee in a dilemma by not following their written direction in respect to the opening of the case with the police. "Curnin ought to have had more respect for the pledge" which the Committee "had given to Hurry Muhan" and for their authority than to act in opposition to their recorded orders. The Committee, therefore pointed out to the Governor General that their address would afford a forceful illustration of the inconsistency of uniting the office of Assay Master with that of the Secretary to the Mint Committee. It would be "advisable and indeed necessary to appoint a well selected officer to the situation of Secretary to the Mint Committee" as early as might be practicable or convenient.⁵⁶

The Government on the 15th July, 1840 informed the Mint Committee that they agreed with the Committee on almost all the points excepting that the Government could not consent to forego their demand on Curnin for a reimbursement of the value of the stolen gold. The Government directed the Mint Committee to see that the amount was replaced at Curnin's expense. They also concurred with the "Committee in their view of the advantages of separating the office of Secretary to the Mint Committee from the office of Assay Master."⁵⁷

On the 24th July, the Mint Committee asked Curnin to make over charge of the office of the Secretary to the Mint Committee and the records and the property of the office to John Greenway, "the Register and Accountant".⁵⁸ The Committee nominated Greenway senior as "Head Clerk to the Mint Committee and Register of the office" on a salary of Rs. 400/- per month for the future conduct of the duties of the Committee's office.⁵⁹ It should be noted here that Ramkamal's observations in April, 1840 respecting Curnin and the need of separating the two offices held by that gentleman were prophetic. The Mint Committee and the Government came to the same conclusion after a thorough enquiry. *

In August, 1840 Ramkamal wrote to Dr. Wilson that there was "much *Golmal* in the Mint". Curnin was in trouble.⁶⁰ In September

he stated that the Mint Committee had been active in investigating the abuses. The Assay Master's establishment had been reduced and cut. Ramkamal had reason to believe that Curnin had sent a memorial to the Court of Directors and the Government had sent all the papers and correspondence relative to Curnin to the Court.⁶¹

John Curnin submitted a memorial dated the 28th September, 1840 with two enclosures for transmission to the Court of Directors in appeal against the Mint Committee's report of the 3rd July, 1840, and the decision of the Government on the case of gold deficiency in the assay office. Meetings of the Mint Committee were held on the 15th, 16th, 17th, 19th and 20th October, 1840 for the purpose of considering Curnin's memorial.

In paragraph 128 and the following paragraphs of the memorial, the charges brought by Curnin against Ramkamal Sen and his son were incorporated.

Curnin wrote that some years ago Ramkamal Sen was a writer on the establishment of a news paper on a salary of Rs. 16/- per month. He subsequently became the Cash Keeper of the Government Gazette; then the Native Secretary of the Asiatic Society, and ultimately the Bullion Keeper of the Calcutta Mint "solely", as he had been told, "through the influence and friendship of Dr. Wilson" and through these various changes Ramkamal and his family became "rich and influential". Ramkamal Sen had the management of Dr. Wilson's private affairs and to assist him in that capacity he had a *Sircar* named Laxminarayan Gupta who upon his joining the Mint was the Laminator. Harimohan Sen was appointed the Bullion Keeper in succession to his father, Ramkamal Sen.

The Bullion Keeper had as a condition for his security the privilege of appointing every one of the Indian servants in every department of the Mint through which the bullion in course of business passed; also the Superintendents in various departments and a corps of Indian guards called *Burkundaz*. Curnin further stated that the Mint organisation was effective so far as the Bullion Keeper's responsibility was concerned; for that as he appointed and could dismiss without the power of instituting an enquiry as to why or wherefore, he was absolute and those under him in the Mint were virtually his slaves. They were either Bullion Keeper's relatives or were connected with him or his family. Their unity of interest was not likely to be conducive to the interest of the Government as it completely precluded the possibility of anything being known as to the real working of the system.

*His charge against Harimohan Sen was that during his absence from Calcutta in 1835/36, some misunderstanding arose between the Laminator and the Bullion Keeper. The result of this was that the Laminator was forced to tender his resignation and that he was succeeded in that office by the Bullion Keeper's brother-in-law.*⁶²

In January, 1841 Ramkamal wrote that he and his son had fallen under Curnin's displeasure and his attack upon Ramkamal was "quite gratuitous". The blow Curnin had aimed at Harimohan, injurious as it was, had come at a time "when he had reason to expect his exertions and services to be rewarded by an increase of salary".⁶³

"Curnin had various causes of being displeased" with Ramkamal and his son. Curnin had asked Ramkamal "for a loan of a lac of Rupees for building a ship which request was not of course complied with. He ... asked for a loan of few thousand Rupees ... and afterwards made several attempts to open money transactions with Horeemohun—in all of which he failed".⁶⁴

Prinsep with the sanction and order of the Committee and the Government introduced the practice of returning all assay beads into the Mint and strictly conformed to it during his tenure. Curnin on entering the office upset the whole of the arrangement and system of business adopted by all his predecessors, made it a practice "to pocket them himself" without sanction and without permission of the higher authority. Harimohan in conformity to that practice and in obedience to the Mint Master's orders and on his own behalf requested Curnin to return these beads and to grant receipts for a large quantity of bullion Curnin had in his charge belonging to the Mint for more than a year. "Curnin got annoyed and took it as an offence".⁶⁵

Ramkamal stated that Curnin had a relation of his to serve and there being no situation to put him in, he wanted to "create one by getting poor old Moffutt turned out and after converting the cutting and burning department into a melting room to put his friend in it". This proposition was approved of "neither by the Mint Master nor the Committee" and it consequently fell to the ground. Curnin, however, supposed that Harimohan was opposed to it and therefore he lost his point.⁶⁶

After failing in this, he next sought for an opportunity to propose something similar again to provide for his relation. When he found that he was not supported in carrying his point, "he made a most vigorous attempt to get rid of Greenway's son and that too by ruining the young man's character forever".⁶⁷

After succeeding in Prinsep's office he wanted to do wonders. He undertook to refine the Mint gold. He took gold worth about 2 lakhs of Rupees and after trying "all his philosophical mode of refining" for more than a year, he signally failed and made a mess of the whole of the metal.⁶⁸

It would be interesting to note that the Mint Committee on the 24th February, 1842 expressed the same opinion to the Government on Curnin's experiments. The Committee stated that the experiment to refine gold "by cementation entirely failed" and that it subsequently became necessary to "incur a further charge at the rate of 14 annas percent to have it refined by contract out of the Mint".⁶⁹

Ramkamal further stated that there was a large balance due from him. "He was so careless that he was robbed right and left". The gold was "stolen by his own people, the *Sekras*" (Goldsmiths). He made use of this opportunity to accomplish his object of taking revenge upon William Greenway. He laid the charge of theft at his door and it was on account of his innocence and the impartial investigation of the Mint Committee that he cleared himself and was afterwards "honourably acquitted by Government".⁷⁰ Curnin stated that the whole of the people in the Mint were "to a man's relation". Ramkamal informed Dr. Wilson that this was "a false assertion for out of about 100" Indians under Harimohan, there were only "4 or 5 men" who were distantly related to him. Curnin represented the Laminator to be Harimohan's brother-in-law. This was "also untrue". He was not his brother-in-law but a distant relation. The Mint Committee had furnished them with an extract of Curnin's memorial, a part of which was sent by Ramkamal to Dr. Wilson for his perusal. Ramkamal stated that Curnin's representation and statements were "untrue". According to him Curnin had "proceeded from vindictive motives and bad feelings". He had picked up information from "gossips" only.⁷¹

Ramkamal stated that Harimohan had been called upon by the Committee to defend himself against Curnin's accusation and his defence would go by the next opportunity together with the Mint Master's and the Committee's explanations. Dr. Wilson would have both Curnin's statement and counter statements from those whom he had attacked before him and would be able to see everything clearly with regard to all his misrepresentation. Curnin had "not spared anybody in the Mint from the highest to the lowest whether dead or alive".⁷² He appealed to Dr. Wilson for his "vindication".⁷³

The Mint Committee addressed a letter to the Government on the 20th October, 1840. They submitted Curnin's memorial in

original dated the 28th September, 1840 and other connected papers for orders.

In paragraph 77 of the letter, the Mint Committee thought "it right to notice the insinuations and imputations" made in Curnin's memorial against Ramkamal Sen and his son Harimohan Sen "*without any apparent ground whatever, or even any apparent provocation*". The Committee hoped that these "respectable individuals" would not be allowed to suffer for these "unsupported aspersions". The Committee noted that "Ramkamal Sen in particular" held the very honourable and responsible situation of Cashier of the Bank of Bengal and was "*preeminent*" in the society "for his integrity and high character"⁷⁴

The Secretary to the Government of Bengal in the Financial Department informed the Committee on the 25th November, 1840 that Curnin's memorial would be transmitted by the earliest despatch to the Court of Directors. He informed also that the "very insubordinate disposition" which Curnin evinced in various parts of his memorial and his correspondence with the Committee could not be reconciled by the Governor. The Court would in due time pronounce orders on Curnin's appeal. But the Governor would fail "in his attention to the character and responsibility of the Mint Establishment", if he overlooked the prominent failings of Curnin. Throughout the proceedings of the Committee Curnin had "exhibited a want of that directness of conduct, and correct standard of principle" which must be required from an officer filling a high confidential situation under the Government. The Governor, therefore, had resolved, "to suspend him at once from that appointment", pending a reference to the Court of Directors, "upon whose will the final orders as to Curnin must of course depend". Curnin was, however, permitted to draw Rs. 1175 and annas 10 only per month being half the salary of the appointment of Assay Master.⁷⁵ John Grant received the charge of the assay office from Curnin on the 14th December, 1840.⁷⁶

On the 15th of February, 1841 Ramkamal wrote that Curnin had left the country to fight his cause in England. John Grant was Acting Assay Master but the office required a learned Assay Master.⁷⁷

In May, he expressed doubt about Curnin's return to India and his restoration to his former office.⁷⁸ In October, he wrote that the Mint Master's office was made more responsible. "He must give certificate of valuation or assay of bullion." John Grant, the Acting Assay Master reported that this was "a duty always done by Assay Master now taken from his hands". There was much confusion

which was not likely to cease until Curnin's return and appointment of another Assay Master to be called Mint Master's Assay.⁷⁹

The Secretary to the Government of Bengal in the Financial Department, informed the Mint Committee on the 21st January, 1842 that the Court of Directors had "permitted Curnin to return to the office of Assay Master but declining consent to his resuming the office of Secretary to the Mint Committee" or to his drawing any allowance during the period of his suspension.⁸⁰

Curnin was warned that any future instance of "impropriety of conduct" would, on being brought to the notice of the Court of Directors, "be followed by his immediate dismissal". The Court of Directors subjected Curnin to penalties and they did so in the hope that Curnin might profit by the warning which he had received.⁸¹

In May 1842 Ramkamal wrote that Curnin had resumed his office and he appeared to be "very quiet".⁸²

It should be noted here that in those days it was very difficult to fight against a Government official particularly if he belonged to the ruling nation. Ramkamal had to enter into a bitter struggle to protect his own reputation and the reputation of his family. After a strict investigation into the charges brought by Curnin against him and his son, the Government had to uphold the cause of the Sens. Ramkamal Sen and his son could ultimately make an arrogant European official humble and very quiet.

Again, Curnin alone was not fed with *bazar* gossips. Critics of Ramkamal Sen would even today prefer to believe that Ramkamal could amass so much of wealth certainly through some means other than legal. Sen might have earned much more in the Mint than his known income. Such an idea could get currency in the society because all his biographers remained silent over the questions respecting the sources of his income. Sen's record in the Mint was absolutely clean. The observations of the Mint Committee and the Government would have at least some sobering effects on his critics. On the basis of facts, it is to be held that for earning money Ramkamal Sen did not debase his character. The gossips on this score should therefore die down for ever.

On the 8th July, 1844, Harimohan tendered his resignation of the office of the Bullion Keeper to become the *Khazanchee* of the Bank of Bengal.⁸³ Pearymohan Sen, the second son of Ramkamal was nominated by the Mint Committee to succeed Harimohan as Bullion Keeper on the 3rd August, 1844,⁸⁴ the very day Ramkamal expired.

An attempt may now be made to understand the circumstances in which the Indians had to work in the Mint during the period under review.

The Mint was open for the reception of bullion and worked from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. But many of the establishment staff attended at an earlier hour to prepare the fires etc. and others remained later to weigh and secure the bullion in the progress of coinage and to clean the machinery after the work was done.⁸⁵

Mint rolls were kept by the Europeans and if the Indian Superintendents or workpeople failed to attend or came late, they forfeited a day's pay or a moiety thereof, as the case might be, unless they accounted for their absence to the satisfaction of the Mint Master.⁸⁶

An account was kept of fines thus levied and the amount had been appropriated in remunerating parties for working extra hours, in rewarding persons who might have given information whereby petty thefts had been detected and occasionally for office contingencies.

In June, 1827, the Mint Committee informed the Government that in July, 1821 the balance of the fine account amounting to Rs. 10,578-15-1 was carried to the credit of the Government.⁸⁷ In 1832-33, the fines levied amounted to Sicca Rs. 708-9-0. On the 14th October, 1833, there was a balance of Sicca Rs. 356-0-11 in hand on this account.⁸⁸

When Ramkamal was at the head of the Indian establishment in the Mint, an initiative was taken to secure pensionary benefits for the workers who had been attached to the Mint from 25 to 48 years and who were incapacitated by age, infirmity or injuries received from accidents in the course of service which prevented them from being usefully employed.⁸⁹ According to Government rules only superior classes of public servants were entitled to pension.⁹⁰ It was for the first time that the cases of the workers were submitted "for human consideration of the Vice-President in Council."⁹¹ The Government disallowed the "claims to pensionary support" of the different individuals whose cases were forwarded. They however recommended to the Mint Master to offer employment to their relatives.⁹² Pension rules did not cover the workers. In general, wage of the Indian working people was meagre. Then there was the inhuman system of imposition of fine on workers for not attending duties or for coming late to work. Such was the plight of workmen in the Calcutta Mint.

It would rather be wise to say that Bullion Keeper's job was a non-paying one. Even then Ramkamal accepted the situation. He was not afraid of shouldering responsibilities. The general life style of wealthy Calcuttans was not acceptable to him. He was laborious and alert. A question might come up why did Ramkamal accept that situation in the Mint? Was it just to satisfy his ego? In answering these questions we would have to take various factors into consideration.

The reputation of a wealthy Indian family in Calcutta to a great extent depended on the connections it could establish with the important Europeans in the settlement. By accepting the situation of Bullion Keeper, Ramkamal became an important Government official. It offered him an opportunity to establish contact with the highly placed European officials. The mercantile community and the opulent Indians had transactions with the Mint.⁹³ Ramkamal could make himself familiar with them also. Thus from his position in the Mint he became well acquainted with the upper stratum of the Calcutta society.

The Bullion Keeper, to man his department had to find out trusted individuals. No Bullion Keeper could come out of the Mint with fair name unless he took extraordinary precaution to recruit his workers. He had the right to nominate them. Ramkamal certainly appointed some of his near relations⁹⁴ and friends in his department. This naturally made the family economically strong and at the same time added prestige to it. Their number however, did not appear to be large.

His experience in the Mint, capacity of rendering unusual labour, his honesty, in addition to his wealth and high connections placed him in a very dignified position in the contemporary Calcutta society and helped him to secure the job of the *Khazanchee* or *Dewan* of the Bank of Bengal, the most powerful financial institution of India of that period. It should be noted however that the Board of Directors of that institution was dominated by mercantile men. Without their confidence, only with governmental support one could not expect to secure such a coveted situation. The Calcutta Mint provided him with the scope of earning confidence of both the mercantile community and the Government officials and thus paved the way for his further success in economic and social life in the nineteenth century Bengal.

Reference Notes

1. Progs. Mint Committee, 1826, Vol. III, No. 376. Letter to the*Governor General in Council by the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 29 July, 1826.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., January-December, 1832, June, 1832, No. 17. Letter to the Vice-President in Council by the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 21 June, 1832.
4. Ibid., January-December, 1832, October, 1832, No. 8. Letter to the Vice-President in Council by the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 19 October, 1832.
5. Ibid., January-December, 1832, June, 1832, No. 17. Letter to the Vice-President in Council by the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 21 June, 1832.
- * (i) Mothoor Mohun Sen, Dewan of the Calcutta Mint was removed by Davidson, the Mint Master, Calcutta Mint in October, 1810.
- (ii) Ramtonoo Chatterjee served in the Dacca and Calcutta Mints. Ramtonoo joined the Calcutta Mint as the Bullion Keeper in December, 1810 and continued in that office till August, 1814. He was removed for old age in September, 1814.
- (iii) Madan Mohan Ghose was appointed Deputy Bullion Keeper in 1814 and was promoted to the situation of the Bullion Keeper in 1817.
6. Progs. Mint Committee for 1825-26, Vol. II, No. 336/1, Letter from Madan Mohan Ghose to Robert Saunders, Mint Master, Calcutta, dated the 7 June, 1826.
7. Ibid., 1825 Vol. I, No. 120. Letter to the Mint Committee by J. Trotter, Mint Master, Calcutta, dated the 13 August, 1825.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., Vol. I, No. 126. Letter to John Trotter, Mint Master, by Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 2 September, 1825.
11. Ibid., 1825-26, No. 221. Letter from Holt Mackenzie, Secretary to Government to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 2 January, 1826.
12. Ibid., 1826, Vol. 3, 376. Letter from the Mint Committee to the Governor General in Council, Calcutta, dated the 29 July, 1826.
13. Ibid., 1825-26, Vol. II, No. 336. Letter from Saunders, the Mint Master, to the Secretary to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 8 June, 1826.
14. Ibid., for 1825-26, Vol. II, No. 336/1. Letter from Madan Mohan Ghose, the Bullion Keeper to Robert Saunders, the Mint Master, Calcutta, dated the 7 June, 1826.
15. Ibid., 1825-26, Vol. II, No. 336. Letter from R. Saunders to the Secretary to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 8 June, 1826.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.

- 1 George Davidson, the Mint Master, Calcutta Mint in his letter dated the 30 August, 1811 wrote to the Mint Committee that in the Bengali office the salaries were small. The Bullion Keeper an office of considerable trust and confidence had only 50/- Rupees a month.
Progs. Mint Committee. Letters Received 1811-1813, No. 10.
C. M. Ricketts, Secretary to the Government in his letter dated the 18 October, 1811 informed the Mint Committee that the Vice President in Council authorized a monthly increase of Rs. 30/- to the Bullion Keeper.
Progs. Mint Committee, Letters Received 1811-1813, No. 11.
 19. Progs. Mint Committee, 1825-26, Vol. II, No. 336. Letter from R. Saunders to the Secretary to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 8 June, 1826.
 20. Ibid.
 21. Ibid., 1826, Vol. III, No. 376. Letter from the Mint Committee to the Governor General in Council, Calcutta, dated the 29 July, 1826.
 22. Ibid., 1826, Vol. III, No. 380. Letter from E. Molony, Actg. Secretary to the Government to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 17 August, 1826.
 23. Ibid., 1826, Vol. III, No. 434. Letter from H. T. Prinsep to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 16 November, 1826.
 24. Ibid., 1827-28, Vol. I, No. 45. Letter from R. Saunders to the Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 15 February, 1827.
 25. Ibid.
 - † In the margin of the letter Saunders worked out how the full amount of Bullion Keeper's allowances could be absorbed in payment of interest on Rs. 50,000/-, if he had to borrow the sum at the market rate of interest.
- | | |
|---|-----------|
| Rs. 50,000/- @ 12% per annum... per month | Rs. 500/- |
| Deduct interest on the paper to be deposited @ 5% ... per month | Rs. 208/- |
| | Rs. 292/- |
| Present Salary of Bullion Keeper per month | Rs. 250/- |
| Difference (Minus) | Rs. 42/ |
26. Progs. Mint Committee, 1827-28, Vol. I, No. 45. Letter from R. Saunders to the Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 15 February, 1827.
 27. Ibid., 1827-28, Vol. I, No. 48. Letter from the Mint Committee to the Vice President in Council, Calcutta, dated the 26 February, 1827.
 28. Progs. Mint Committee, for 1827-28, Vol. I, No. 52. Letter from H. T. Prinsep, Actg. Secretary, to the Government to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 8 March, 1827.
 29. Ibid., 1827-28, Vol. I, Enclosure of No. 75. Letter from Saunders, the Mint Master to the Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 30 April, 1827.
 30. Ibid., 1827-28, Vol. I, No. 75. Letter from R. Saunders, the Mint Master to the Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 30 April, 1827.
 31. Ibid., 1827-28, Vol. I, No. 126. Letter from R. Saunders to the Secretary, the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 16 July, 1827.

32. Ram Kamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 18 January, 1841. MSS. Eur. E 301/4.
33. Progs. Mint Committee, January-December, 1832. August 1832, No. 14. Rules for the Bullion Keeper. Letter from R. Saunders to the Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 2 August, 1832.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., January-December, 1832, November, 1832, Enclosure of No. 20. Letter from Ramkamal Sen, the Bullion Keeper to R. Saunders, the Mint Master, Calcutta, dated the 11 November, 1832.
39. Ibid., January-December, 1832, November, 1832, No. 20. Letter from Saunder to the Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 13 November, 1832.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., January-December, 1832, November, 1832, No. 21. Letter from the Secretary, Mint Committee to G. M. Batten, Officiating Deputy Secretary to Government, Financial Department, Calcutta, dated the 16 November, 1832.
42. Ibid., January-December, 1832, November, 1832, No. 28. Letter from G. M. Batten, Officiating Deputy Secretary to Government to the Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 20 November, 1832.
43. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, dated the 28 November, 1835, MSS. Eur. E. 301/2.
44. Ibid., Calcutta, the 18 April, 1840, MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
45. Progs. Mint Committee, July, 1840-41, No. 11. Letter from G. A. Bushby, Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 1st July, 1840.
46. Progs. Mint Committee, July, 1840-41, No. 6. The report of the Mint Committee dated the 3 July, 1840 addressed to the Governor General, Governor of Bengal.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., July, 1840-41, No. 39. Letter from G. A. Bushby, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 15 July, 1840.
58. Ibid., July, 1840-41, No. 42. Resolution of the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 24 July, 1840.
59. Ibid., July, 1840-41, No. 47. Letter from the Mint Committee to the Governor General, Governor of Bengal, Calcutta, dated the 27 July, 1840.

60. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, the 6 August, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
61. Ibid., Calcutta, the 18 September, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
62. Progs. Mint Committee, October, 1840/41, Enclosure No. 2 to No. 20. The Appendix to Curnin's Memorial.
63. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, the 18 January, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Progs. Mint Committee, February, 1841-42, No. 16. Letter from Mint Committee to the Governor General, Governor of Bengal, Calcutta, dated the 24 February, 1842.
70. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, dated the 18 January, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Progs. Mint Committee, October, 1840/41, No. 36. Letter from the Mint Committee to the Governor General and Governor of Bengal, Calcutta, dated the 20 October, 1840.
75. Progs. Mint Committee, December, 1840/41, No. 22. Letter from the Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 25 November, 1840.
76. Ibid., December, 1840/41, No. 20. Letter from Mint Committee to the Civil Auditor, Calcutta, dated the 17 December, 1840.
77. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, the 15 February, 1841, MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
78. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, the 8 May, 1841, MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
79. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, the 15 October, 1841, MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
80. Progs. Mint Committee, February, 1841-42, No. 3. Letter from Secretary Government of Bengal to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 21st January, 1842.
81. Progs. Mint Committee, February, 1841-42, Enclosure of No. 3. Copy of the Despatch from the Court of Directors to the Governor of Bengal, No. 35 of 1841 (Financial Department), London, dated the 17 November, 1841.
82. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, dated the 12 May, 1842. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
83. Progs. Mint Committee, May to July, 1844, No. 33. Letter from the Mint Master to the Secretary to Mint Committee, Calcutta, the 11 July, 1844.
84. Ibid., August, 1844, No. 1. Resolution of the Mint Committee on the appointment of Pearymohan Sen as the Bullion Keeper, 3rd August, 1844.
85. Ibid., October, 1833, No. 11. Letter from the Mint Master to the Officiating Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 14 October, 1833.

86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., 1827-28, Vol. I, No. 112. Letter from the Mint Committee to the Vice President in Council, Calcutta, dated the 21st June, 1827.
88. Ibid., October, 1833, No. 11. Letter from the Mint Master to the Officiating Secretary to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 14 October, 1833.
89. Progs. Mint Committee, 1831, No. 61. Letter from the Mint Master to the Secretary to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 25 February, 1831.

† Names of workers whose cases were forwarded for Pensionary benefits :

	White Smith	Aged	Length of service
1. Ramprasad	Fileman.	64 Years	39 Years
2. Paran	" "	66 "	48 "
3. Nasiram	" "	71 "	43 "
4. Ramkanto	" "	75 "	40 "
5. Ramprasad	Black Smith	67 "	48 "
6. Ramsundar	" "	75 "	48 "
7. Nobee	Brazier.	75 "	48 "
8. Durjadhone	Carpenter.	60 "	40 "
9. Bhimdas	Stamp Feeder.	40 "	25 "
10. Kuraram	"	56 "	35 "

(Progs. Mint Committee, for 1831, N. 61.)

90. Progs. Mint Committee, for 1831, No. 25. Letter from the Deputy Secretary to the Government to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 4 January, 1831.
91. Ibid., No. 61. Letter from the Mint Master to the Secretary Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 25 February, 1831.
92. Ibid., No. 99. Letter from the Officiating Secretary to the Government to the Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 29 March, 1831.
93. The quantity of private Bullion brought to the Mint upto 2nd August, 1832 considerably exceeded that of the same period of the past year.
Progs. Mint Committee, January-December, 1832, August, 1832, No. 14. Letter from the Mint Master to the Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, dated the 2nd August, 1832.
94. In the statements of employees and workers of the Mint submitted by Saunders in 1832, the following names appeared :—
(i) Harimohan Sen, the Deputy Bullion Keeper, on a Pay of Rs. 100/- p.m.
(ii) Ramdhone Sen, on a pay of Rs. 35/- p.m.
(iii) Gangadhar Sen, on a pay of Rs. 25/- p.m.
Progs. Mint Committee, January-December, 1832, August, 1832, No. 14.

Section—II

Ramkamal in the Bank of Bengal

The original idea for the creation of a semi-State Bank in Bengal came from Tucker, the Accountant General at Fort William as far back as the year 1801.¹ On the 1st May, 1806 mainly at the initiative of the Government the Bank of Bengal first opened for business under the name and style of the Bank of Calcutta with a capital of Sicca Rupees 50,00,000/-.² During the Governor-Generalship of Lord Minto on the 2nd January, 1809, the first charter was granted and on that occasion the name of the Bank was altered to the Bank of Bengal.³ It was declared in the charter that the affairs of the Bank would be conducted by nine directors, three of whom would be nominated by the Government to represent their interest and six by the proprietors. The Bank was directly connected with and to a considerable extent supported by the capital of the Government.⁴

In the establishment of the Bank of Calcutta Book-Keeper's salary was equal to the salary of the *Khazanchee* or Cash-Keeper. It was fixed at Rupees 300/- per mensem.⁵

The first meeting of the Directors of the Bank of Bengal was held on Monday, the 2nd January, 1809. The Directors resolved to appoint Tucker, President, Morton, Secretary and Treasurer and Ramchandra Roy, *Khazanchee*.⁶ The profits for the first half-year of the Bank's existence were declared on the 6th July, 1809 and amounted to Rs. 2,44,140-10-0 or 9.49/64th percent per annum on its capital.⁷

In 1829 Raj Kissors Dutt's forgeries attracted much attention. The Bank advanced money against some Company papers tendered by him for loan. When the papers were presented to Dorin, the Secretary of the Bank, he noticed some peculiarity in the printing which naturally aroused his suspicion. He sent those Company papers to the Treasury for verification in accordance with an arrangement entered into with the Accountant General in 1828. On their being returned with the assurance that all was right, Dorin passed them; afterwards, however, they were found to be forged.⁸ The Government declined to make good to the Bank the amount thus advanced and the matter was referred to the Court of Directors in England. The Court of Directors, however, turned down the claim of the Bank in June, 1834. The Bank brought an action against the Government in the Supreme Court but lost it. The Privy Council

also confirmed the decision of the lower court. On its being known that no dividend would be declared, the Bank Stock fell from Rupees 6000/- to Rupees 500/- premium and even to par,* so great was the consternation in the bazar. The Bank suffered a loss of Rs. 3½ lakhs⁹ and the Directors had to write off the whole amount. "The excitement, however, was merely temporary"¹⁰

In the meantime Madanmohan Sen, the old *Dewan* or *Khazanchee* of the Bank expired on the 4th November, 1832. Seventeen respectable and opulent Indians applied for that vacant office. After screening, the authorities of the Bank considered only eight suitable applications. Finally, Ramkamal Sen was found to be the most suitable candidate for the situation of *Dewan* of the Bank of Bengal and he was appointed to that office. Ramkamal Sen joined the Bank on the 14th November, 1832 on a pay of Rs. 200/- per month in addition to a commission at the rate of 5%.¹¹

It was in 1833 that a half-yearly balance statement of the Bank was first published to the proprietors. In September, the Bank received a letter from the Government expressing much dissatisfaction at the facts published in the balance statements for the preceding half year. The Government took exception on the following points :—

- (1) The amount of overdue and unpaid balances ;
- (2) the nature of some of the advances made ;
- (3) alleged excess in amount beyond the limits imposed by the charter and
- (4) the description of securities said to be held which were forbidden by the charter.*

In reply, the Bank went into elaborate detail to show how the several unsatisfactory items on its balance statement had been arrived at, the principal reason shown being the terrible commercial crisis of December, 1832.¹² Immediately following this letter came another from the Government, notifying that it had been decided "to relieve Mr. G. Udny * from the duties of Commercial and Marine Accountant, and Commercial Salt and Opium Auditor, that his undivided attention" might be given to those of the "Secretary and Treasurer of the Bank of Bengal"**. It was also proposed to increase the Secretary's salary to Rs. 28,800/- per annum, half to be paid by the Bank and half by the Government.¹³

Peary Chand Mitra observed that Ramkamal Sen was the right hand of George Udny, the Secretary of the Bank. Somehow or other he got into hot water with George Udny. The matter came before the Directors but Ramkamal came off with flying colours. The

Directors of the Bank placed unlimited confidence in him and he was often asked to attend their meetings to give them the benefit of his advice.¹⁴

The instance of the confrontation between Ramkamal Sen, the *Khazanchee* and George Udny, the European Secretary is also confirmed by a very eminent researcher, Prof. Amiya Kumar Bagchi. In an article published in the State Bank of India Monthly Review, (Dec., 78-Jan. 79) Prof. Bagchi stated that in an establishment dominated by Europeans, there was a natural tendency to underestimate the importance of the functions performed by the *Khazanchee*. Attempts were made in 1813 to decrease the salary of the *Khazanchee* on the ground that his post was a perfect sinecure. But the importance of the *Khazanchee's* functions came out in 1835 in a dramatic confrontation between George Udny, the Secretary of the Bank and Ramkamal Sen, the formidable *Khazanchee* of the time. The full case was presented to the Board of Directors who recognized the value of the *Khazanchee* as the chief source of information on the status of the constituents of the Bank and the necessity of keeping his departmental autonomy unimpaired.¹⁵

The relationship between Ramkamal and Udny was far from cordial even in the year, 1843. In June, 1843 Ramkamal wrote that he had "an enemy in the direction, George Udny, the late Secretary" then Sub-Treasurer and a Government Director and Member of the Mint. Ramkamal did not fear as he had "more friends than enemies", particularly Colvin House who gave him support.¹⁶ But there was sufficient reason to believe that at the end of his life their mutual relations improved. This could be shown from the incident narrated below.

Harimohan Sen recommended his brother Pearymohan Sen to succeed him as Bullion Keeper of the Mint. The Mint Master also recommended Pearymohan. But the Mint Committee did not give immediate assent to the recommendation of the Mint Master. Applications were invited from candidates by an advertisement for the vacant office of the Bullion Keeper of the Calcutta Mint. The Mint Committee examined those applications carefully and nominated Pearymohan considering the recommendation of the Mint Master and also "the favourable testimony respecting his conduct while Assistant *Khazanchee* at the Bank of Bengal recorded in a certificate given to him by the Junior Member of the Committee". The Junior Member of the Mint Committee was no other than George Udny.¹⁷ This incident would go to show that George Udny had no enmity with the Sens at

least in this period. If he had really any, he would not have given such a strong testimonial to Pearymohan Sen, the second son of Ramkamal Sen.

In 1835, the Bank was advised by the Government that the Court of Directors of the East India Company had made several suggestions and called for certain information with a view to the granting of a new and amended charter in place of the existing one.¹⁸ Some further correspondence terminated in the publication by the Government of a notification in the Gazette on the 7th March, 1835, authorising an increase of the Bank's capital from fifty to seventy lakhs of Sicca Rupees.¹⁹

It was at this period that the "new or Company's Rupees *" were issued in place of the existing Sicca Coinage, and the Bank decided that the new charter should be expressed in Company's Rupees, and the new capital as 75 lakhs of the Company's Rupees in shares of Rs. 4,000/- each in place of the originally proposed 70 lakhs of Sicca Rupees in shares of Sicca Rupees 5,000/- each.²⁰ The Government held 275 shares of the Bank of the value of Rs. 4,000/- each.²¹

An Act (No. XIX of 1836) was granted by Lord Auckland embodying detail regarding increase of capital and conversion of the same from Sicca to Company's Rupees. This act was passed as a provisional measure pending the sanction of these and other details in the proposed new charter.²²

The Bank received through the Government of India in the month of November, copies of correspondence which had passed in England between the Court of Directors of the East India Company and the projectors of a "Great Banking Establishment", proposed for British India and it was requested to comment on the suggested scheme. The signatories of the letter addressed to the East India Company were a large number of influential merchants having business connections with India and China. The scheme was for the foundation of a "Bank of India" to be established by an Act of Parliament and to hold a charter from the East India Company. The merchants in the said letter tried their best to show the limitations of the Bank of Bengal.²³ The Directors of the Bank of Bengal recorded an unfavourable opinion of the scheme propounded. This opinion was also concurred in by the proprietors at a special meeting held on the 10th June, 1837.²⁴

Ramkamal, a keen observer of things, was fully aware of the implications of these proposed changes. On the 4th January, 1838 Ramkamal informed Dr. Wilson that upon the Bank shares a dividend of 14 p.c. had been declared. The premium was 75 per cent or

Rupees 7,000/- each share.* This was the best time for selling them.²⁶ But Wilson did not dispose of his shares as advised by Ramkamal. During this period there was a strong rumour in the commercial circle that a Bank of Asia was likely to be established in Calcutta.

Ramkamal wrote on the 15th February, 1841 that there was a proposal to set up a Bank of Asia at Calcutta. He would recommend Dr. Wilson's shares to be sold and money remitted to him.²⁶ This time also Dr. Wilson did not sell out his shares. But in 1843 Dr. Wilson expressed a desire to sell his shares although the Bank shares were considered to be the best and the safest investment in this country and they had hitherto given better interest than Dr. Wilson might get in anything else. Ramkamal opined that it would be better if he could keep the money in a public security in his own country.²⁷

The proprietors of the Bank at a meeting held in April, 1838 resolved to increase the capital of the Bank from Company's Rupees 75 lakhs to Company's Rupees 112½ lakhs. This was done to cope with the increasing competition of the Union Bank.²⁸ This resolution was confirmed by Act XXIV of 1838. Shortly afterwards Act No. VI of 1839 came into force. The Act of 1839 repealed the charter of 1823, Act No. XIX of 1836 and Act No. XXIV of 1838. The establishment of Branch Banks was also authorized.²⁹ Section XXXVIII of the Act No. VI of 1839 provided that it should be lawful for the Bank of Bengal, with the sanction of the Governor General in Council, to establish Branch Banks.³⁰ The Bank of Bengal at this period was considering the question of opening branches at various trade marts in the *mofussil*. The city of Mirzapur was selected for the initial experiments, and Claud Hamilton, of Messrs Hamilton, Higginson & Co. of that city was appointed Agent. The usual route for freight to Mirzapur was by boat, and the time of transit five or six weeks.³¹

Ramkamal Sen, an Indian official of the Bank, was asked to take the responsibility of opening the Branch at Mirzapur. This very fact clearly illustrates the high esteem which this Indian enjoyed in the establishment.

Ramkamal in February, 1840 wrote to Dr. Wilson that he had been deputed to establish a Branch Bank at Mirzapur and as far as the means given him and the resources of the country admitted he could not be said wanting in what was expected from his exertion.³² The first half-year's profit on the working of this agency amounted to

Rs. 13,791-3-10.³³ In this connection H.T. Prinsep's minute dated the 7th April, 1841 would be relevant. He stated that the Bank of Bengal had, by its charter, the power of establishing branches. This power it had not yet used, being content to give many facilities at Mirzapur through a working Agent. This Agent received remittances of cash, purchased bills payable at Calcutta and drew bills also within limits prescribed by the Directors at Calcutta. So long as it was mere exchange business that the Bank desired to carry on at Mirzapur, an Agent was all that could possibly be required.³⁴

In December, 1839, George Udny resigned the Secretaryship. The holders of some 1700 or 1800 of the Bank's shares urged that a mercantile man and not a covenanted civilian be appointed to the vacant office.³⁵ The Government wanted to appoint a civilian Secretary. At the meeting of the Bank's Directors, the three Government Directors moved that the Secretary to the Bank should be a Government servant. Six mercantile Directors gave a note of dissent to this proposal and ultimately Thomas Bracken, a noncivilian, was appointed Secretary.³⁶ Bracken's election was confirmed by a special meeting of the Proprietors, held on the 6th February, 1840.³⁷ Ramkamal Sen informed Dr. Wilson that there was a change in the Secretaryship. The local Government threatened to withdraw its support * in which case the institution would be ruined.³⁸

In August, 1835, a man named Ramkamal Singhee was sentenced to seven years transportation for altering a Bank note.³⁹ A fraud was again practised on the Bank on the 22nd September, 1838. A person representing himself as one "Robert Coombs" took a loan of Rs. 11,900/- for three months on deposit of Government Promissory Notes for Rs. 13,000/-. Those Notes were stolen from the Government Agents' Office. The forged endorsements which passed current at the Bank were also passed by the officer of the Accountant General's office and Treasury.⁴⁰ Again on the 2nd February, 1841, a fraud took place in the Bank Note Department. One Iswarchandra Das, who was employed in that Department, was the principal party implicated in the fraud. Total amount involved was Rs. 34,000/-. The General Cash Dept. made the payments against two documents, one for Rs. 16000/- and the other for Rs. 18000/-. Early in the morning succeeding the day of the fraud, when the usual regular comparison of the accounts between different departments was made, the deficiency was discovered. The books kept by the *Khazanchee* were closely examined, but no entries corresponding with the above mentioned payments were discoverable, nor could it be found that any notes equal in amount to the sum abstracted in coin had been received

for exchange. In the next morning, the Directors met to take the affair into consideration.

They found that the abstraction lay entirely with the *Khazanchee's* Department. The scheme seemed to have been concocted, matured, and perpetrated in the Department and to have had no remification elsewhere. Ramkamal Sen, the *Khazanchee*, who held good security for the *poddars*, finding how matters stood, endeavoured to make the securities responsible but failed therein. Iswarchandra Das absconded, but was afterwards arrested. Owing, however, to some extraordinary interference, all the parties implicated, who had been secured by the Deputy Superintendent of Police, slipped from his fingers and justice was thereby frustrated.⁴¹

On the 15th February, 1841, Ramkamal wrote that his labour in the Bank was very heavy and as the business was increasing his responsibility was awful. He had in the "last week lost Rs. 34,000/-" embezzled by a *Sett or Poddar* and unless he could recover it, he would be loser.⁴²

In this connection it would be interesting to narrate a story which was described in her autobiography by Saradasundari Devi, the mother of Keshabchandra Sen and daughter-in-law of Ramkamal Sen. When Keshab was a boy, his mother Saradasundari Devi selected a pretty little girl to be given in marriage to Keshab. The girl had very beautiful hair. Saradasundari used to wash her hands and feet, loved her as her own daughter and the mother fed the little one along with her own son Keshab. She also called the mother of the girl as her son's mother-in-law. Saradasundari declared that the girl was destined to be her daughter-in-law. In due course the marriage could have been solemnized but for only one reason it could not be done. Her husband's elder brother Harimohan strongly objected to the proposed marriage. The reason he showed was that the grandfather of the girl, Iswarchandra Das, who was appointed by Ramkamal in his own department of the Bank of Bengal was supposed to have abstracted an amount of Rs. 34,000/-. Harimohan firmly believed that after that incident of fraud, his father Ramkamal became depressed and his mental depression subsequently developed into respiratory troubles which ultimately killed him.

Therefore, to Harimohan, the proposed bride was the grand daughter of the killer of his father. Hence, he declined to agree with the proposal of Saradasundari, the widow of Pearymohun Sen, his deceased younger brother. Saradasundari concluded the narration of this incident with the remarks that her affection for that girl was genuine and she loved that girl quite intensely.⁴³

In the month of May, 1842 Ramkamal was found reporting to Dr. Wilson that his duties in the Bank were "too heavy" for him and the responsibilities greater.⁴⁴ A case of fraud took place once again on the 6th October, 1842. A forged cheque for Rs. 4,000/- purporting to have been drawn by C. E. Schoene in favour of one Abhoycharan Banerjee was paid at the Bank. This was the last day before closing for the Durga Poojah holidays and the crowd was great. The forgery was drawn on one of the cheques issued to Abhoycharan Banerjee, a constituent of the Bank, who absconded.⁴⁵

In June, 1843 Ramkamal wrote a very long letter to Dr. Wilson on the Bank of Bengal. He narrated the circumstances in which he was placed in connection with the Bank from 1838 to 1842. He had lost about Rupees 50,000/- embezzled by the people he employed. His labour and responsibility were "uncommonly great". He was not "equal to the former", fear and anxiety was "greater for the latter" in fact it was "terrible". He might be reduced to a beggar in 24 hours in which the money transactions passed through his hands and authority—"30 to 50 lacs" daily. His allowance was Rs. 18,000/- a year and an addition might be granted if the Treasury payment was transferred. He was thinking of retiring at the end of the year. He adopted Dr. Wilson's expression that the business would leave him or he would leave the business. The latter was creditable.⁴⁴

About Bank of Bengal he stated that the Bank had paid in January and June, 1843, 14 percent dividend and if the Bank remained attached to the Government and its notes admitted by the State and the establishment of the Bank was managed with caution and care, the shares would always give better return than Company papers. But he apprehended that a change was probable, the attention of the public had of late been attracted by the profit made in the last two years. The Bank after paying its expense about Rs. 1,20,000/ a year had declared 12 to 14 percent dividend. As a result attempts had been made to introduce more banks here. The Union Bank having gone down from its ostensible high state, there appeared a necessity for establishing a joint stock company by the merchants and capitalists to compete and share with the Bank of Bengal. Ramkamal would not be surprised if funds were brought from England for the sake of better interest and if this was done the Bank of Bengal's profits would be reduced.⁴⁷

About the rates of discount and interest charged by the Bank of Bengal Ramkamal commented that the rates which the Bank had charged during 1841 to 1843 were certainly high but he added that

this was done with a view to keeping down the rage of extravagant and wild speculation on the part of those who had no fund of their own and who carried on large business with borrowed means. These people grumbled much and were dissatisfied with the Bank's charges. They argued that a public Bank was for the convenience and accommodation of the merchants and commercial men. The Bank was not meant for taking "advantage of their want and distress" and making "large profits for its sharcholders". Ramkamal wrote that to please them the authorities of the Bank had been obliged to undertake some additional work which gave the Bank no profit but increased Ramkamal's responsibility "ten fold". The Bank took bills for salary and other demands, bills on Government, *Hoondees*, Drafts and on account of constituents, procured their audit and acceptance and realized the money free of charge. This had made the Bank "Sircar General of the Country". Europeans and Indians had ceased to employ *sircars* (collectors). The Bank took care of the business of collection and it was safe. The Bank also paid nearly 3/4th of demands against the Treasury. The people sent the Bills on Government, Mint Certificates or Drafts etc. to the Bank for easiness, convenience and safety and chiefly for promptness over the Treasury where a delay was made of some hours in paying even a small sum but the Bank could pay a lakh of rupees in few minutes. In consequence of this the Government proposed to transfer its payment to the Bank and secure itself from loss which it had sustained. When this arrangement was made the country would have "the largest Bank and money transactions in India". The Bank had purchased the adjoining house next to Colvin's and enlarged the Bank Buildings. From the circumstances, however, Ramkamal conjectured that another Bank was likely to be established.⁴⁸ In July severe illness obliged him to go up the river for a change of climate.⁴⁹ In January, 1844 he stated that he had been very ill. He could "not attend to business having left the Bank".⁵⁰ In July 1844, Harimohan Sen, the eldest son of Ramkamal Sen was appointed *Khazanchee* of the Bank of Bengal in the place of his father who resigned.⁵¹

On the question of Branch Banking the Government and the mercantile community differed a lot. H. T. Prinsep was in favour of Branch Banking.⁵² The Directors of the Bank, however, gave only a "moderate approval to the proposal in 1835". This question appeared to the Directors to be one of State policy and general finance. If the Government determined that it was beneficial and safe to extend the influence and dealings of their Bank in the manner

indicated by the Government, the Directors were quite prepared to second its views in that respect.

On the 6th of April, 1835, a special meeting of the Proprietors was held to consider the suggested amendments to the charter of the Bank. The Proprietors in the first instance passed a resolution to the effect that it was "not at present desirable to extend the operations of the Bank either by way of branches or agencies, or in any manner to place the assets or responsibility of the Bank beyond the immediate control of the Calcutta Directors."⁵³

Ramkamal stated that he had been deputed to establish a Branch Bank at Mirzapore. He was sorry to write that the "Bank Directors knew very little of the existing means or real state of the Upper Province", before they sent him up.⁵⁴

The opinions of the Directors, Proprietors and Ramkamal would show that they were not much interested in Branch Banking during that period. The interested party was the Government and the Government alone was feeling the need of a Branch of the Bank of Bengal at Mirzapore. The majority of the Directors came from the mercantile community and "the Bank of Bengal was regarded by businessmen in Calcutta as rigid and unhelpful from their standpoints".⁵⁵ The Directors gave a moderate approval only. The Proprietors, on the other hand sternly opposed the move. Their opposition to Branch Banking clearly showed that they did not find the system useful to them. Ramkamal's views though not very explicit yet the tone of his letter would suggest that he too was not in favour of Branch Banking at that time. His views and the views of the free traders were more or less the same on this issue.

"The system of Branch Banking", wrote Collins, "as a natural consequence of its logical development ultimately" put into the hands of a small group of powerful Bankers the entire credit facilities of a State. The Bank of Bengal was a semi-State Bank. Hence "the entire credit facilities of a State" when controlled in a large measure by the State itself, would naturally in the opinion of the free merchants go against their interest. Generally, those who opposed the system thought that it was "socially unsound, detrimental to the free development of business enterprise and dangerous to the public welfare".⁵⁶

The Proprietors also did not favour the idea of extending the operations of the Bank by way of branches or agencies beyond the immediate control of the Calcutta Directors. They obviously thought that the Directors had "an intimate personal knowledge of the character, ability and resources of the customers"⁵⁷ to whom they would extend the facilities of loans. But in the case of Branch or

"absentee" Banking, the Directors could not have the opportunity of supervising the day to day operations of the distant Branches. As a result the immediate interest of the Proprietors might be jeopardised. "Rammohan as well as Dwarkanath were out and out supporters of free trade".⁵⁸ They were against the monopolistic control of trade by the East India Company. "The free traders showed great solicitude for the welfare of the Indian people"⁵⁹ Rammohan, Dwarkanath and their friends were close to their counterparts in India.

There is an idea current among some of the students of history of the nineteenth century Bengal that the conservatives of the Calcutta society were the supporters of the Government of the East India Company or in other words, the supporters of monopoly interest, while the moderates or the progressive minded people were the "out and out supporters" of free traders. This concept does not hold good if one closely examines the ideas of Ramkamal Sen who is generally regarded as the mouthpiece of the conservatives. On the question of Branch Banking the views of Ramkamal Sen did not clash with the ideas of free traders and this unity of thought could be traced to his practical knowledge about the real state of economy of the Upper Province. Ramkamal was no idle visionary in the field of business. January, 1848 saw the closing of the Mirzapur Agency, the Bank's first experiment in opening Branches in *mofussil*.⁶⁰ Ramkamal Sen knew the country and its stage of development. As a result he depended much on his private judgment on important issues. He, therefore, could not be a camp follower either of the monopolists or of the free traders. On certain issues his opinions might coincide with those of the free traders and on others they might be contradictory.

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 10. C. N. Cooke, *The Rise, Progress and Present Condition of Banking in India*, Calcutta, 1863, p. 104.
 11. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. II, 4th ed., Calcutta, 1384 B.S., pp. 445-446.
- * Between 1829 and 1832 there were several severe commercial panics consequent on the failure of some of the largest of the Calcutta-houses. The Bank stepped in to protect one of the most important firms which still remained, and in so doing deliberately infringed its charter. (1) To Messrs. Alexander & Co., the Bank directly or indirectly advanced more than 23 lakhs, the extreme limit permitted by the charter being one lakh. (2) The Bank accepted some indigo concerns as collateral security, though the charter prohibited the lending of money on the security of immoveable property. (3) The Directors of the Bank worked the indigo factories themselves, when the firm collapsed in December, 1832. This was contrary to the provisions of the charter, which prohibited the Bank from engaging in trade.
- "The Governor General of the time took an amazingly lenient view of the extraordinary failure of the Government Directors to perform their obvious duty". J. B. Brunyate, *An Account of the Presidency Banks*, Calcutta, 1900, p. 6.
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- * Richard Udny, C. S., was appointed to act as Secretary and Treasurer on the 26th August, 1830. On the 4th November, 1830, George Udny succeeded his brother, who was compelled by ill health, to resign his situation. C. N. Cooke, *The Rise, Progress and Present Condition of Banking in India*, Calcutta, 1863, p. 103.
- ** From this it appeared that upto September, 1833, it had been the custom for the civilian Secretary to the Bank to carry out other duties at the same time. This seemed to be the only instance in which allusion was made to such a state of things ever having existed. G. P. Symes Scutt, *The History of the Bank of Bengal, an Epitome of a Hundred Years of Banking in India*, Calcutta, 1904, p. 27.

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21. C. N. Cooke, *The Rise, Progress and Present Condition of Banking in India*, Calcutta, 1863, p. 96.
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23. Ibid., pp. 31-32.
24. Ibid., p. 33.
- * Value of each share — Rs. 4,000/-
Premium — Rs. 3,000/-

Price — Rs. 7,000/-
25. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 4 January, 1838. MSS Eur. E. 301/2.
26. Ibid., Calcutta, 15 February, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
27. Ibid., Calcutta, 1st June, 1843. MSS Eur. E. 301/5.
28. B. Ramachandra Rau, *Present Day Banking in India*, Calcutta, 1930, Appendix III, p. 647.
- * In 1840 Union Bank had a capital of one Crore, and though its note issue was not recognized by the Government, it competed not unsuccessfully with the Bank of Bengal in other respects.
J. B. Brunyate, *An Account of the Presidency Banks*, Calcutta, 1900, p. 14.
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35. G. P. Symes Scutt, *The History of the Bank of Bengal, an Epitome of a Hundred Years of Banking in India*, Calcutta, 1904, p. 37.
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- * The Government informed the Bank that relying on the appointment of a Civilian to "the office of the Secretary" they had given the Bank power to open branches and had "prosecuted the important experiment to what extent a paper currency can safely and conveniently be introduced into Indian (i.e. in the interior) and were prepared to have continued measures to the same end through the same agency ... but (if a non-official were appointed) it would be necessary either to relinquish altogether such intention or to devise an agency more subject to the control and more entitled to the confidence of the Government, because managed ministerially by an officer of the Civil Service". The Bank replied that the improvement in the management of its Calcutta business under a mercantile Secretary would be worth more than the extension of its circulation in the interior under an official Secretary. J. B. Brunyate, *An Account of the Presidency Banks*, Calcutta, 1900, p. 8.
38. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 14 February, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
39. C. N. Cooke, *The Rise, Progress and Present Condition of Banking in India*, Calcutta, 1863, p. 105.
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Section III

Ramkamal's Economic Base

Ramkamal who could not prosecute his studies for want of money had become a man of substantial means by the end of his life. This becomes evident from an inventory of the estate, effects and property of Ramkamal Sen submitted by Matilal Seal and Tarachand Mazumdar, the Executors of his Last Will and Testament, to the Supreme Court, Calcutta on the 29th November, 1847. From this inventory it can be ascertained that Ramkamal's real estate consisted of his residential house at Kalutollah, a house in Pataldanga, three houses on Mission Row, two garden houses, one at Mirzapore and the other at Pataldanga, Calcutta and a house at Garifa, 24-Parganas. He also had plots of land in Kalutollah, Nimtollah, Arpooly, Bow Bazar, Lal Bazar, Jagannath Ghat and Garpar, Calcutta. In addition to these, he had paddy land in Dakshindwaree and a small zamindary, called "Meerbag Talook" in Garifa.

His personal estate consisted of Government Securities and cash to the amount of Rs. 4,04167-9-9.¹ The valuation of his property was estimated, after his death, at "not beyond ten lakhs".²

He did not inherit any property worth mentioning from his father. His father was a man of ordinary means and had a very large family to maintain. Ramkamal himself was never directly involved in business like Ramdulal Dey, Matilal Seal or Dwarkanath Tagore. Visibly, Ramkamal rendered services in different institutions and earned his income from salaries and allowances. Therefore, it remains to be explained how Ramkamal could acquire so much of wealth which seems to be disproportionate to the fortune he earned by his exertions in different establishments during his entire service career.

Ramkamal began his career in December, 1802 on a small salary in Calcutta. From 1803/4, he would be found working in different organisations. The salary of an Indian writer or a type setter or a *sircar* was small indeed. But as Ramkamal served in several establishments at the same time, his total monthly receipts cannot be said to be very small. He could reasonably save a portion of his salary income after meeting his domestic needs.

Money lending business was common among Calcuttans during this period. Even the most eminent Raja Rammohan "established the base of his opulence through money lending business in Calcutta from 1797 to 1815."³ Usury was not considered a crime or a sin in the society and therefore no social stigma was attached to such a business.

An article highly critical of Ramkamal Sen appeared in the *Hindu pioneer* in March, 1836, written by one "Tom Peep" of the Hindu College *. He painted Ramkamal as a money lender, lending money at a high rate of interest to one of his European clients, a newly appointed Judge. The Judge prayed for a loan of Rs. 50,000/-. The author wrote : "the Baboo calculated in his mind the interest of fifty thousand for ten years at the compound rate of twelve percent" and readily agreed to pay the amount.⁴ But to support the contention of the author no direct evidence can be found. In the accounts for the period from August, 1844 to October, 1847, submitted by the Executors of Ramkamal's Last Will and Testament, not a single entry showing an amount received from any individual on account of repayment of loan taken from Ramkamal Sen can be found. If Ramkamal had really an extensive money lending business upto the closing years of his life, at least some of his clients would have returned the money taken on loan after his death and in that event such entries would have appeared in the accounts.

But outright rejection of Tom Peep's opinion would be injudicious. It is probable that the angry young man of the Hindu College just gave expression to the opinion prevalent in the society at that time about the course Ramkamal had pursued to build up his fortune brick by brick. It will, therefore, not be unfair to accept Tom Peep's opinion in that light only.

In 1827, Robert Saunders, the Mint Master, Calcutta Mint, remarked that the value of the property of Ramkamal Sen might be estimated at 2 lakhs of Rupees.⁵ This remark shows that Ramkamal could accumulate property of 2 lakhs of Rupees within a period from December, 1802 to February, 1827. Only one logical explanation that can be adduced to justify his huge property was that he must have had money lending business at least in the formative years of his life in Calcutta with a view to establishing the base of his opulence like Raja Rammohan Roy. In money lending business he certainly earned a substantial income which helped him to acquire properties of the value of 2 lakhs of Rupees by 1827 though he had a very humble beginning in 1802.

Once an individual was able to accumulate wealth to the tune of two lakhs of Rupees or once the base of opulence was built by following a judicious policy of investment, multiplication of that amount would become comparatively easy.

From 1827 to 1832, he was in the Mint. His salary was Rs. 250/- per month. But during this period also he served other institutions and received allowances as well. From November, 1832 to July,

1844, he was in the Bank of Bengal and earned a very respectable income. The allowances he drew annually was Rs. 18,000/-.⁶ In these years he had been deeply associated with the commercial world. He had intimate knowledge of the money market. Therefore, it became easy for him to plan his own investment in a manner which would give him maximum possible return and security. During this period he could obviously save a substantial amount from his salary income too.

Messrs Colvin Ainslie Cowie & Co., the Merchants and Agents, returned to the Executors Government Promissory Notes of the value of Co's Rs. 1,74,533-5-4. * Ramkamal possibly lent those Promissory Notes to that firm of British Merchants and Agents, who utilised them to augment their profit and Ramkamal in return might have received an additional interest over and above the prescribed rate from that mercantile house.

Ramkamal had a good income from house rents also. Messrs Colvin Ainslie Cowie and Co. used to collect rent of some houses owned by Ramkamal. The firm paid to the Executors from February, 1845 to June, 1847 a sum of Rs. 29055-8-8 ** on account of house rent realised by them.

From Meerbag Talook his income was nominal. From the 3rd August, 1844 to the 3rd August, 1847, the total income on account of ground rent from Meerbag Talook was only Rs. 579-2-6 or Rs. 193/- per annum. Raja Rammohan with the money he earned in the money lending business "purchased zamindaries yielding an annual income of Rs. 10,000/".⁷ Ramkamal's attitude to zamindary was quite opposite to that of Raja Rammohan. Ramkamal directed the trustees to purchase "Company's papers, Bank shares or Talook" with the money *** which he had given to his wife, Chandramony. His preference was clear. His first preference was for the government securities, his second preference was for the shares of the Bank of Bengal and his last was for the zamindary. Ramdulal Dey, who died in 1825, was perhaps "alone among Bengali businessmen to enjoin on his children on oath never to purchase zamindaries". Ramdulal told them that they could take advantage of the fluctuations of the market but not the weakness of the ryots.⁸

Ramkamal in fact had no zamindary. But he was not as strong as Ramdulal in his attitude to investments in zamindaries. He had recommended to take recourse to such investment only as a matter of last resort. In this respect he was somewhat different, a non-conformist, for he charted a different course for investment while many of his wealthy contemporaries favoured investment in zamindaries forgetting the ruinous effect of the system on the ryots in general.

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3. Pradip Sinha, *Social Change, The History of Bengal (1757-1905)*, ed. N. K. Sinha, C.U., 1967, p. 396.
- * Tom Peep [Kylas Chunder Dutt].
Kylas Chunder Dutt, 1817-1857. Son of Russomoy Dutt, educated at the Hindu College.
4. Tom Peep, [Kylas Chunder Dutt], *Scenes in Calcutta, The Hindu Pioneer*, Vol. I, No. 7, March 1836, reprinted in *Calcutta Keepsake*, ed. Alok Ray, Calcutta, 1978, p. 164.
5. Progs. Mint Committee, for 1827-28, Vol. I, No. 45. Letter from R. Saunders to the Secretary, Mint Committee, Calcutta, the 15th February, 1827.
6. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 9 August 1843. MSS Eur. E. 301/5.
- * Government Promissory Notes received by the Executors from Messrs Colvin Ainslie Cowie & Co.

(1)	8	pieces	5	percent	sicca	Rs. 71,600	Co's	Rs. 76,373	5	4
(2)	27	"	4	"	"	Rs. 71,400	"	76,160	0	0
(3)	2	"	5	"	"		"	7,000	0	0
(4)	10	"	4	"	"		"	15,000	0	0

Total Co's—Rs. 1,74,533 5 4

Paid to the Executors on account of house rent realised—

On February	7,1845	"	Rs. 15,946	14	6
On December	31,1845	"	3,800	00	0
On July	28,1846	"	6,000	00	0
On June	3,1847	"	3,308	10	2

Rs. 29,055 8 8

7. Pradip Sinha, *Social change, The History of Bengal (1757-1905)*, ed., N. K. Sinha, C.U., 1967, p. 396.
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Ramkamal on Sati and Question of Inheritance

Section I

Sati

On the 21st December, 1822 a meeting of the principal Indian inhabitants of the town of Calcutta was held at the Town Hall for the purpose of considering in what manner they might best express their sentiments of regret on the approaching departure of Marquis of Hastings from India. Radhakanta Deb raised the point that Marquis of Hastings should be thanked for his policy of non-interference with the practice of Sati and the subject should be incorporated in the address to be presented to him. Radhakanta's exact proposal was that Lord Hastings should be particularly thanked for "the protection and encouragement which he had afforded to the ancient and orthodox practice of widows burning themselves with their husbands' bodies".¹ Radhakanta's reference to Sati, sparked off a controversy. Some discussions took place about the practice of Sati to which Ramkamal Sen strongly objected, remarking that a subject "so horrid and absurd" should not be introduced in a meeting of this kind.² *The Samachar Darpan* reported that in reply to Radhakanta Deb, Ramkamal Sen told the meeting that the practice of Sati was dishonourable to India and therefore, no reference to such a subject should be made in the address. It was because of his objection, the address did not contain any reference to such an obnoxious custom."

It is clear that in 1822, Radhakanta Deb and Ramkamal Sen were holding opposite views on the subject of Sati. To Radhakanta it became an issue of great importance and therefore he was keen to incorporate it in the address but to Ramkamal it was 'dishonourable' to India and hence an issue unfit to be incorporated in a document of public importance. In 1822, Ramkamal could not be said to have acquired sufficient eminence in Calcutta society. But his independent views brought him into open confrontation with Radhakanta Deb, a very important person of the contemporary society of Calcutta. This incident would show that Ramkamal was a man of independent judgment and courage. A formidable opponent like Radhakanta Deb

even failed to bring about a change in his mind on this particular question.

The practice of Sati was of ancient origin. Evidence had been found of a case that occurred in the fourth century B.C. In the Mughul period, Akbar wanted to put a stop to this horrid custom. No permanent result could, however, be achieved in absence of an organised effort. The Company's Government in India followed a policy of *laissez faire* in matters of religion. They were not prepared to prohibit this age-old practice in spite of the appeals from officials and missionaries. The Government were afraid to offend the religious superstition of the Hindus because they thought it might affect the army. In 1798, however, Sir John Anstruther, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court told the Magistrate of Calcutta that Sati should not be permitted in the areas under his jurisdiction. The practice immediately ceased within the limits of his jurisdiction.⁴

Lord Wellesley recorded a minute in favour of the abolition of the rite on the eve of his departure to England.* But nothing effective was done. In 1810, the Sudder Court wanted to regulate the practice setting forth the circumstances in which the act was to be considered illegal. Subsequent to 1820, the question was much discussed with increasing earnestness but some of the Government officers like Colebrooke, Mountstewart Elphinstone, and Colonel Sutherland shrunk from the proposal of a direct interdiction and some went even to assert that it would "violate the rule of toleration to which our Government owed its stability".⁵

Lord Amherst consulted his officers on the question of prohibition of the practice of Sati and considering the diversity of opinions informed the Court of Directors, who had shown much interest in 1823 on the subject and impliedly favoured its abolition;⁶ that he was not "prepared to recommend an enactment prohibiting suttees altogether". He was inclined to depend on the progress in the diffusion of knowledge amongst the Indians "for the gradual suppression of this detestable superstition".⁷

Instructions were given to Lord William Bentinck by the authorities in England to adopt some definite measures for the immediate or gradual abolition of Sati. There were sufficient reasons for such instructions. Between 1815 and 1828, the total number of Satis in the Presidency of Fort William including Benares and Patna came to 7941.⁸ * Immediately after his arrival, Lord Bentinck circulated a confidential communication among fifty or sixty of the Chief Civil and Military officers of the Presidency⁹ requiring them to give their opinions with regard to "the immediate or gradual abolition of the

rite of Sutee".¹⁰ A merchant of the town, Calder, who was the Sheriff for that year, also received a similar communication.¹¹ Lord Bentinck specifically wanted to know what effect was it likely to produce on the minds of the Sepoys in the event of any interference on the part of the Government. Majority of the officers favoured abolition.¹² Dr. Wilson wrote that the replies contained "a considerable variety" of opinions. There was no difference as to the obnoxious character of the ceremony and the necessity of its total prohibition. But the question whether the prohibitive measures could be enforced "with success and with safety", gave birth to variety of opinions.¹³

On the 25th November, 1828, Dr. Wilson gave his own opinion to the Governor General. He practically opened his letter with the sentence that his opinions were "adverse to any authoritative interference with the practice".¹⁴ Wilson's opinions had similarities with those of Lord Amherst. Wilson honestly expressed his views on this sensitive issue. Marshman, however, wrote that "the most strenuous advocate for non-interference was the eminent orientalist, Dr. Horace Wilson"¹⁵

On the 8th November, 1829, Lord William Bentinck wrote his historic minute on Sati. He quoted the opinions of Wilson and Rammohan in his minute. He accepted some points of both and discarded others. Rammohan had been mentioned as a "warm advocate" for the abolition of Sati. Rammohan's opinion was that "any public enactment would give rise to general apprehension...." He wanted to suppress Sati "quietly and unobservedly by increasing the difficulties, and by the indirect agency of the police".¹⁶ He did not favour any regulation to suppress the custom.

On one very fundamental point Bentinck found similarity of thought of these two learned men of the age. Neither of them could view with favour a regulation banning Sati. This unity of opinion of Wilson and Rammohan introduced a new element in the controversy and also brought about a qualitative change in the prevalent situation. It was an altogether unexpected development and this naturally compelled the rational minds to think over the subject afresh in the new light.

The historic Regulation No. XVII of 1829 prohibiting Sati was passed on the 4th December, 1829. On the 14th January, 1830, a petition against the regulation was submitted by a powerful section of the Hindus to the Governor General. The petitioners described the regulation as "an interference with the religion and customs of the Hindoos" which they viewed with "most serious alarm".¹⁷ Eight hundred signatures were obtained for this petition. The signatories

hoped that the regulation would be "abandoned".^{18*} Lord Bentinck permitted the petitioners to make an appeal to the King in Council.¹⁹

The Dharma Sabha formally came into existence on the 17th January, 1830 to protest against the Sati Regulation. The meeting was held at the Sanskrit College, Calcutta and it was attended not only by the important Bengali *bhadraloks* but also by the important Hindustances. The decision of the Governor General on the petition against Sati Regulation was announced. The meeting decided to form a committee to draw up a petition to be sent to England. Ramkamal Sen, Radhakanta Deb, Gopeemohun Deb, Maharaja Kali Krishna Bahadur, Asutosh Sarkar and seven others were included in the committee. Bhabanicharan Banerjee was elected Secretary to the Sabha. Ramkamal contributed a sum of Rs. 100/-towards its Building Fund.²⁰

On the 2nd August, 1830 it was reported that "the great object" of the Dharma Sabha, the sending of a petition to England "had been accomplished".²¹

Bathie, an attorney, who was also the Deputy Sheriff for that year accepted the brief of the Dharma Sabha. Calder, the Sheriff wrote to the Military Secretary of the Governor General that he saw the draft of a petition in the hands of his worthy deputy.²²

J. C. Marshman complained that the venerable *pundits* of the Sanskrit College who agreed to support Rammohan could not do so because of the pressure exerted by the traditional Hindus. "Foremost amongst the agents of that party was Ram Komul Sen", Sen was doing this "out of compliment to his European patron".²³ Marshman obviously referred to Dr. H. H. Wilson as the patron of Ramkamal Sen. *

It was reported in August, 1830, that the petition to be sent to England in favour of Sati had been drafted in English by Radhakanta Deb. "This petition was sent for correction to a learned Englishman".²⁴ The report did not mention the name of the "learned Englishman" but it could be assumed that he was no other than Dr. H. H. Wilson. It had also been suggested by Dr. Kopf that Dr. Wilson "defended" Dharma Sabha petition.²⁵

It was true that Wilson had "more confidential intercourse with the natives of all classes, than any man in India".²⁶ It was also true that he was a "great patron, and the idol, of pundits and brahmins".²⁷ He was enjoying an advantageous position in the Society and therefore his opinions were likely to differ on many occasions with the opinions of others who did not enjoy such positions and talents. But whatever might be his private judgement on this issue, * it should be

borne in mind that basically Dr. Wilson was a very responsible officer of the East India Company and he would do nothing which could go against the fundamental interest of his own nation.

There was no doubt that he did not, possibly he could not, agree with Lord Bentinck on the Sati issue. But his disagreement stemmed from his anxiety for the safety and security of the British Empire in India. It would be unfortunate to hold that his love of the traditional society of Calcutta was the fundamental reason of his disagreement.

He corrected the petition of the Dharma Sabha. He could also advise how the Sabha as a body should move against the Government. He might have exerted his influence in favour of it. He might have also influenced his Indian friends like Ramkamal Sen to agitate against the Sati Regulation.

But what were his motives behind these activities? His fundamental motive was to canalise the dissatisfaction of the orthodox Hindus, who were in a majority at that time in Calcutta society, in a constitutional way. He was actually not defending anything or any body and in reality he was teaching a section of the *bhadraloks* of the Calcutta society in the art of political struggle in a legal way without endangering the safety and security of the empire. Allan Octavian Hume followed the same process in building up the Indian National Congress. Whatever, Wilson or Hume did in this respect, they did it for the protection of the empire of Great Britain in India and in the process the *bhadraloks*, could obviously derive some benefits for themselves and ultimately for the nation. Ramkamal was for the abolition of Sati in 1822. But he changed his opinion and apparently came to support the cause of the Dharma Sabha in 1829-30. It had been said that Ramkamal changed his opinion just to please his patron, Dr. H. H. Wilson. A good number of cases of such men who changed their opinions to please their masters on this issue had been cited by Pravat Chandra Gangopadhyay in an article written by him in *the Tattava Kaumudi*, a periodical published by the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta to substantiate this contention.²⁸

It would be unfair to conclude that just to make somebody happy, a man of the character of Ramkamal Sen would change his opinion and make himself inconsistent without cogent reasons. Obviously he had to take into consideration a number of very important factors before he could decide to change his mind. The opinion of the traditional society headed by Radhakanta Deb, opinion of his patron, Dr. H. H. Wilson, the unity of opinion of Wilson and Raja Rammohan on a very fundamental point—all these exerted tremendous pressure on his mind. Standing at the crossroad he might be suffering

from a sense of being wrong, "of being out of step" with the group²⁹ or with the mature judgement of the intellectuals of the stature of Wilson and Rammohan. In addition to all this, a careful study of his life and activities would reveal that he critically examined "the dark side" of the British administration.³⁰ His experience taught him that the betterment of the people of India was never the basic motive of the British rule in India. In the legal measure abolishing Sati, he sensed rightly or wrongly something ominous, some ulterior motives of the Government.

His views on political and economic issues concerning India could well be equated with the sentiments of modern nationalists. On this issue also he feared an aggression of a foreign Government in the socio-religious affairs of a major section of the Indian people. It was this spirit that dictated him to fall in line with men like Radhakanta Deb, Bhabanicharan Banerjee and others.

The fundamental objective of Radhakanta was to preserve and protect the custom of Sati. For, "his belief in the wisdom of his ancestors was unlimited"³¹ and his respect for the usages was more or less absolute. To Ramkamal, Sati was "horrid", "absurd" and "dishonourable". His sole motive was to put a stop to the invasion of a foreign Government in the socio-cultural domain of a subject race. *

The Sati petition was rejected by the Privy Council in July, 1832.³² The Dharma Sabha since then had been continuing its existence without any proper objective or perspective whatsoever. It was Ramkamal Sen who boldly came forward to raise the banner of protest at a meeting of the Sabha held in the month of April, 1836. He emphatically declared that the Sabha had been rendering disservices to the community of Hindus at large.³³ It was left to him to tell the members of the Sabha that the organisation had outlived its purpose and a new organisation was necessary in the broader national interest. Thus being inspired by a greater ideal, he unhesitatingly made himself the most powerful instrument for the destruction of the Sabha. He subsequently turned out to be the pioneer of a secular organisation which enjoyed the support of all the communities, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians. This organisation known as the Landholders' Society, came to be regarded as the first national political organisation in the subcontinent of Hindoostan.

Whatever may be the reason, on the Sati issue Ramkamal could not support the Governmental measure abolishing it. But this should not be taken to indicate that he did not like to ameliorate the condition of women or that he was less interested than Raja Rammohan

Roy for the Welfare of Indian womanhood in general. He was always kind and sympathetic towards women. This can be best illustrated by the terms of his Last Will and Testament. He took all possible care to provide financial security to all the ladies connected with the families of his own and of his deceased brothers.

At the time of his death, all his children were married excepting two minor sons. In case any of them died after marriage before attaining majority leaving behind a childless widow, Ramkamal took that exigency into consideration and provided fund for the security of that unfortunate lady too. Therefore the woes of the women folk of the Hindu Society did not fail to stir his consciousness. To his wife he gave a sum of Rs. 1,60,000/-³⁴ and to his youngest daughter, Bindu he gave Rs. 5,000/-.³⁵ He gave her also a plot of land.³⁶ He directed the executors of his Last Will and Testament to give to his sons Company's paper of the value of Rs. 3,000/- for the purpose of giving Netromony, his eldest daughter a sum of Rs. 10/- per month or Rs. 120/- annually out of the interest of the said amount.³⁷ Biseswari Debi and Jagadamba Debi, * the widows of his two brothers were to enjoy the interest of Rs. 1,500/- and Rs. 1,000/- respectively as long as they would remain alive. Karunamoyee Debi, the widow of Ramdhone Sen, a brother of Ramkamal would also enjoy the interest of an investment of Rs. 1,500/- during her life time.³⁸ His eldest sister ** in the like manner would get the interest of an investment of Rs. 1,000/- during her life time.³⁹ He gave a sum of Rs. 500/- to the wife *** of Pitambar Tarkapanchanan.⁴⁰ To Gourmony Debi, the daughter of his brother he gave an amount of Rs. 500/-. He also gave one hundred Rupees to each of the five daughters **** of his brother Madanmohun Sen.⁴¹ His attempts to give the ladies of his family financial security were the manifestations of his anxious thoughts over the future of those women.

His youngest daughter, Bindu whom he loved much, lost her husband at the age of 14 years. As the father of that unfortunate girl, with a bleeding heart, Ramkamal had to experience how the darkness could envelop the life of a girl after the death of her husband and how she had to withdraw herself from all the happiness of life at so tender an age. A widow had to submit before the cruel injunctions of Shastras patiently in those days for her sheer existence as a being.

His sympathy for women therefore did not flow from his intellect alone. It was the outcome of his intellect and emotion both and hence it was as perfect as it could be.

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 22. James Calder's letter to Capt. Benson quoted in J. C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward, Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*, Vol. II, London, 1859, p. 414.
 23. J. C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward, Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*, Vol. II, London, 1859, p. 415.
 - * James Calder wrote to Capt. Benson, the Military Secretary to the Governor General : "Ramchandra Sarma head pundit of the College who is of Rammohun Roy's School and was expected to sign the address of the abolitionist has been prevailed upon to sign the anti abolition petition, but I am afraid his real sentiments are with the abolitionists. Ramcomul Sen is leading away all those connected with the College to oppose the abolition out of compliment to H. Wilson to whom he owes every thing". C. H. Philips ed., *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, Governor-General of India 1828-1835*. Letter No. 172, James Calder to Capt. Benson [January], 1830. Vol. I, 1828-1831, Oxford, 1977, p. 377.
 24. *John Bull*, August 2, 1830. An account of a Meeting of the Dhurma Sabha, quoted in J. K. Majumdar ed., *Raja Rammohun Roy and Progressive Movements in India, a Selection from Records*, (1775-1845), Calcutta, 1941, p. 176.
 25. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 175.
 26. Lord William Bentinck's Minute on Suttee (November 8, 1829) quoted in J. K. Majumdar ed., *Raja Rammohun Roy and Progressive Movements in India, a Selection from Records* (1775-1845), Calcutta, 1941, p. 142.
 27. J. C. Marshman, *The History of India*, Part II, Serampore, 1867, p. 398.
 - * It should be mentioned that in his lectures on the Vedas, Dr. Wilson had occasion to notice some remarkable passages in one of the Suktas of

- Hymns of the Rich, relating to the disposal of the dead and especially to the burning of widows, for which the Hymn in question was always cited as Authority. He had examined the passages and came to the conclusion that the burning of widows was not authorised by the text of the Rig Veda cited as Authority. Reinhold Rost ed., *Works by late Horace Hayman Wilson*, Vol. II, London, 1862, pp. 270-271. He also recorded his points of difference on this subject with Radhakanta Deb.
28. Pravat Chandra Gangopadhyay, *Satidaha Pratha Nibaran Andoloner Adi Prabartak*, *Tattva Kaumudi*, ed. Barada Kanta Basu, 14th April, 1953, Calcutta, p. 7.
 29. Krech, Crutchfield and Ballachey, *Individual in Society a Text Book of Social Psychology*, New Delhi, C. 1962, p. 506.
 30. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, February 14, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
 31. Anonymous, *Radhakant Deb*, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XLV, No. XC, 1867, p. 323.
 - * "Their (conservatives') opposition largely grew out of feelings of communal pride and vanity and when they found that foreigners and *mlecchas* were seeking to meddle in the affairs of their own religion". A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal 1818-1835*, Calcutta, 1976, p. 146.
 32. Accounts of the Hearing of the Suttee Appeal before the Privy Council, J. K. Majumdar ed., *Raja Rammohun Roy and Progressive Movements in India, a Selection from Records, (1775-1845)*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 199.
 33. *The Samachar Darpan*, April 30, 1836 quoted in Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1384 B.S., pp. 595-596.
 34. The Codicil executed on the 10th June, 1844 by Ramkamal Sen.
 35. The Last Will and Testament of Ramkamal Sen, Item No. 2.
 36. Ibid., Item No. 15.
 37. Ibid., Item No. 4.
 - * Jagadamba Debi was the sister of the poet, Iswarchandra Gupta.
 38. Ibid., Item Nos. 5 & 6.
 - ** Shashimukhi Debi.
 39. Ibid., Item No. 7.
 - *** Kumari Debi.
 40. Ibid., Item No. 8.
 - **** Haroomony Debi, Dayamoyee Debi, Brojomoyee Debi, Mennomoyee Debi and Brahmandamoyee Debi.
 41. Ibid., Item Nos. 9 & 10.

Section II

Question of Inheritance

In January, 1841 Ramkamal wrote for the first time that the missionaries were trying to upset the Hindu law of inheritance.^{1*} He wrote again on the subject on the 8th May, 1841. The missionaries had been fighting for some years to bring about a change in the law of inheritance of the Hindus. It was first agitated by Ward and Marshman in favour of a Hindu convert, a *tele* by caste and an inhabitant of Serampore. He deserted his family which was rich. He was not aware of the consequence and having been disappointed in the change, he was desirous to come back but his *jate* opposed. His brothers took advantage and refused to give him any share in the paternal property. A suit was instituted in the Danish court and it was decreed in favour of the convert, on the plea that his right and title to his father's estate could not be evaded by a change of religion.

But the property which he claimed being in the jurisdiction of the Company Court, he could not avail of the benefits of the judgment of the Danish court at Serampore. The youngman had forfeited his right as he could no longer give *pinda* * to his ancestors.

The missionaries had since been trying individually and collectively to get the Government to change its law. But the local Government could not interfere. The change would upset the system and attend with many changes in the Hindu custom and practice. Pearce and Duff had been crying for a change through their societies in England. Ramkamal understood that their appeal if made to the Parliament must be referred to the Court of Directors and Dr. Wilson might be consulted on the subject.

Ramkamal stated that if the *pinda* system was abolished, it would induce material change in the customs, manners and family or domestic affairs of the Hindus. There would be differences, disputes and want of peace between father, sons, brothers, etc. Education after European system and study of western literature—Ramkamal had no hesitation to say—had already created disagreement. Love to father and mother had been much diminished and this unnaturalness was often seen and observed in educated Indians. In the Christian world, sons claimed affection, attention, care and other considerations from the parents “as a matter of natural law and imperative upon the latter”,

the former thought it as optional to them, to return or exchange anything towards their parents. In this country, if the bondage of law was broken, the peace and harmony in the society and family were destroyed, the independence of the sons upon the father was acknowledged by the Government Dr. Wilson could easily estimate the evil. The only threat to the sons which the father could hold towards them was: "if you forsake my religion, make no *Sradha* or be disqualified to offer *pinda* ... you will get no share of my estate, nor will I allow you to live under my roof".

Ramkamal wrote that Dr. Wilson could judge how disagreeable or unpleasant it was to the feeling of a father to see his sons acting and living in a manner and style followed by "many of our college or educated friends". Under the circumstances "if you can" wrote he, "prevent the threatened shock". He hoped that Dr. Wilson would "try to avert it".²

In the background of the sentiment expressed by Jashua Marshman of Serampore in connection with Vellore Mutiny (1806) if we judge Ramkamal's opinion, it would not be very difficult for us to read his mind. Marshman in 1813 suggested in a pamphlet that for the protection of the British Empire in India propagation of Christianity was an urgent necessity. *

Therefore, Ramkamal, the man who always thought in terms of national interest, could not appreciate the idea of changing the law of inheritance with a view to giving material incentive to conversion even when it was presented in a manner as if it was a necessity in the interest of civilisation to "restore liberty of conscience."³

Reference Notes

1. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, January 18, 1841, MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
- * The Hindu Law on the subject was that a Hindu on becoming a Christian or Mussalman was considered as having lost caste ; and hence he and his heirs, being Christians or Mussalmans, were declared to have certainly forfeited all right to the ancestral property he possessed or had a claim to, at the time he changed his religion.
Duff, A.D. *Lex Loci ; Marriage and Inheritance*, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. III, January-June, 1845, pp. 353-354.
- * The property of a deceased Hindu governed by the Dayabhaga Law passes by succession, including his share in undivided property. The Dayabhaga of Jimutavahana is the leading treatise of the Bengal school.
Succession according to the Bengal school is governed by the capacity for conferring spiritual benefit. The foundation of the doctrine of spiritual benefit is the Parvana Sradha ceremony. In the course of the ceremony the performer presents three different kinds of offerings to his deceased ancestors, namely : (1) pinda or an entire cake, called an undivided oblation ; (2) pinda-lepas or remnants of the pinda which cling to the hand while mixing the ingredients of which the pindas are composed, called divided oblation ; and (3) libations of water.
These three classes of offerings give rise to three classes of heirs, namely : (1) Sapindas, (2) Sakulyas and (3) Samanodakas. The Sapindas succeed before the Sakulyas, and the Sakulyas succeed before the Samanodakas.
Mulla, *Principles of Hindu Law*, ed. S. T. Desai, 15th ed., Bombay, 1982, pp. 167-168.
A person who is a convert, cannot offer pinda to his ancestors and hence he is deprived of his paternal property.
2. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, May 8, 1841, MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
- * Every converted Hindu or Mussulman is necessarily the cordial friend of the British, on the ground of his own interest and security ; for on the continuance of their empire in India his very existence depends Say, that of the millions of Hindustan, only five hundred thousand persons had embraced Christianity : who can calculate the value of five hundred thousand such friends, thus united to us, both by inclination and interest, and scattered up and down throughout the British dominions in India ? J. Marshman, *Advantages of Christianity in Promoting the Establishment and prosperity of the British Government in India, Containing Remarks Occasioned by Reading a Memoir on the Vellore Mutiny* (London, 1813), quoted in A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal 1818-1835*, Calcutta, 1976, p. 152.
3. J. C. Marshman, *The History of India from the Earliest Period to the Close of Lord Dalhousie's Administration*, Vol. III, London, 1867, p. 57.

Ramkamal : New Associations and Attitude Towards British Rule

Section I

New Associations

Ramkamal's close association with the Asiatic Society of Bengal gave him an opportunity to learn the techniques of conducting the business of a modern organisation. Since he was a keen observer of men and things, he learnt how to go along with members of different races, creeds and colours for the furtherance of common objectives of an organisation.

In the early nineteenth century, Bengali *bhadraloks* had four or five important *dals* or groups among them in Calcutta.¹ If somebody did not belong to a *dal* or a group he had to face a lot of difficulties in social and religious matters.² The *dals* were primarily organised on social and religious issues. These organisations never functioned like modern societies, though they were not necessarily always based on castes.

Ramkamal's association with the Dharma Sabha was well known. Whatever might be his reasons for joining that organisation, it is a fact of history that he helped the Dharma Sabha organisationally.

Since the very beginning, the objective of the Dharma Sabha created a strong controversy in the Calcutta Hindu society. The agitators, no doubt, were guided to a great extent by their traditional outlook. Their consciousness did not rise much above the consciousness of a traditional society divided into *dals*, led by wealthy aristocrats mostly of medieval outlook.

In spite of limitations, it had to be admitted that the Dharma Sabha was the first organisation which opposed openly and in an organised manner a regulation passed by the Government. The protest was quite effective. Raja Rammohan could not advise Lord William Bentinck to pass the regulation for the abolition of Sati. Rammohan hesitated and it might be that the pressure of public

opinion against the abolition made him hesitant. It might also be that he did not like "authoritative interference",* in the matter.³

Organisationally the Dharma Sabha "worked as a modern association should, with a programme of action, a committee with a president, a treasurer and a secretary, and a set of rules which delimited the power of the committee. The secretary meticulously kept a book of minutes and an account of its funds."⁴ It also opened branches in some important centres of the country.

The organisational know-how acquired by Ramkamal Sen in the Asiatic Society of Bengal must have been utilised in shaping the Dharma Sabha organisationally as a modern association. "It might be added that the Dharma Sabha conducted its meetings according to strict rules of parliamentary procedure, a form of Westernization acquired from the contact with the British."⁵ Ultimately though the Sabha failed to achieve its objective yet its members gained "organisational experience".⁶ They learnt how to shape a modern association to fight against a foreign government in a constitutional manner. Basically, however, the character of the Dharma Sabha was that of "a modern Society and an amalgam of traditional dals".⁷ After 1832, when the Privy Council rejected its appeal the Sabha gradually degenerated into a mere "caste tribunal".⁸

In 1835, Dr. Wilson wrote an interesting letter to Ramkamal Sen. It was important because it conveyed a definite idea as to how Indians should conduct their agitations for removing their grievances. Dr. Wilson wrote that "there seems every likelihood of some remission being made upon the sugar duties here, and that will give some spur to your agriculture It must be owned that the people of England, the mercantile and Parliamentary people at least, are too greedy for their profits to treat Indian commerce with justice, but it is very much your own fault. You submit too quietly. There is a moral as well as a physical force. You employ neither. The latter is out of the question, but you might exert the former". He continued, "you should hold meetings and petition—petition—petition. Again and again petition the Government of Bengal, the Court of Directors, the Board of Control, whenever you think yourselves aggrieved ... you must hold public meetings, and talk about them and talk boldly too. You can do such things to pay compliments, why not meet to discuss your right? I am no friend to agitation in general but it is necessary for India".⁹

After the rejection of the petition by the Privy Council, Ramkamal Sen's interest in the Sabha practically ceased. Ramkamal could not like the Dharma Sabha to continue any more as a mere

caste tribunal. But that was the organisation with which he was connected as an important member. He did not think it wise to sever all his connection with that body to start afresh a new secular organisation. The Dharma Sabha after all, was the organisation of the most powerful zamindars and affluent persons. Without their support nothing substantial could be achieved simply by forming a secular body. Therefore, Ramkamal by diffusing secular ideas among the members of the Dharma Sabha wanted to raise their level of consciousness, even if for the time being, the task was extremely difficult, for chances were there to misunderstand the initiator at once. His motive was to take them all with him for the struggle ahead. He, therefore, decided to take that risk and at a meeting of the Dharma Sabha on the 19th April, 1836, presided over by Maharaja Kalikrishna Bahadur, Ramkamal read out the substance of the letter he received from Dr. Wilson. Ramkamal pointed out that the discussion conducted in the Dharma Sabha should not be published in the Samachar Chandrika, a newspaper edited by Bhabanicharan Banerjee, its Secretary. He told the meeting that those reports did no good to the people, instead they helped to create dissension and disunity among them. The Dharma Sabha could not be the proper organisation to consider the political questions. He, therefore, suggested the establishment of a branch society to conduct movements for the improvements of agriculture and welfare of the landholders which would be beneficial to all.

Bhabanicharan, the Secretary to the Dharma Sabha opposed the move. But none took any notice of his objections, not even the president of the meeting, Maharaja Kalikrishna Bahadur. It was finally resolved that a branch society be formed to consider the questions proposed by Ramkamal Sen.¹⁰ The Dharma Sabha, however, took no concrete steps to implement the resolution. It showed that though the general members agreed with what Ramkamal had said at the meeting yet they did not feel enthusiastic enough to give effect to their resolution quickly.

On the 14th October, 1837, it was reported that Dewan Ramkamal Sen had decided to establish a new society for the purpose of presenting a petition to the authorities in England on behalf of the rent free landholders and also for the purpose of introduction of Bengali language in the administrative work of the Government.¹¹ Ramkamal Sen took about a year and a half to prepare the ground for his proposed society.

The zamindars of Calcutta and its neighbourhood met at the Hindu College, Calcutta, in the month of November, 1837 to consider

the expediency of organising an association of zamindars. As the chamber of commerce was to look after the commercial interest similarly the object of the proposed association would be to protect the existing land relations. The question of resumption of rent free land was discussed and it was decided that the persons having interest in land should unite and give every possible effort to protect their properties. A provisional committee composed of Radha Kanta Dcb, Ramkamal Sen, Bhabani Charan Mitra and Prasanna Kumar Tagore was formed to draft the prospectus and rules of the proposed association.¹² Ramkamal Sen and Prasanna Kumar Tagore were the secretaries to the provisional committee.¹³ "The only instruction with which the members of the provisional committee were charged was, that, in preparing the rules, they should bear in mind that the Association was intended to embrace people of all descriptions, without reference to caste, country or complexion, and, rejecting all exclusiveness, was to be based on the most universal and liberal principles, the only qualification to become its members, being the possession of interest in the soil of the country."^{14*}

In January, 1838, Ramkamal communicated to Dr. Wilson that "in consequence of the Resumption laws, the whole country including Hindoostan" was ashamed.¹⁵

Some zamindars met for the second time at the Hindu College to approve the rules drafted by the provisional committee which were read out at the meeting by Ramkamal Sen.¹⁶ It was decided that a general meeting of the landholders would be convened at the Town Hall, Calcutta.¹⁷

On the 19th March, 1838 (7th Chaitra, 1244 B.S.) at the general meeting of the landholders in the Town Hall, about 200 important landholders assembled.¹⁸ At this meeting the Zamindary Association formally came into existence. Rules prepared by the provisional committee were adopted. A committee was formed to conduct the business of the Association. Ramkamal and Prasanna Kumar were included in the committee and both of them were specially mentioned as the two most important individuals mainly responsible for this meeting.¹⁹ The organisation included Europeans and Indians alike. *

Whatever might be the secondary objects, it was "the resumption of rent-free lands by the officers of Government" which had called this association into existence. The object of this association of landed aristocracy was to create the means of defeating "by legal means, the resumption measures".²⁰ The speech delivered by Theodore Dickens at the meeting was acclaimed to be "one of the best—if not the very

best".²¹ Dickens congratulated the gentlemen present at the meeting "on the formation of the first society for political objects which has ever been organised by the natives of India with large and liberal views, without exclusiveness, and with ends and aims of extensive utility".²²

The Zamindari Association changed its name to the Landholders' Society in April, 1838.²³ The Society attempted to establish "branch societies in every district of the British Indian Empire, with a view to establishing regular communications on all subjects, connected with the object of the Society".²⁴ The "Political objects" would be attained through the "respectful representation to the Government".²⁵ With the birth of this society, the age of "respectful representation to the Government" on public grounds could safely be said to have begun.

The Government at the instance of the Board of Revenue of which Ross Mangles was then Secretary, was induced to engage in a wholesale crusade against the *Lakhirajdars* throughout Bengal. Resumption proceedings were set on foot simultaneously in every district, and when high handed action was to be sustained the usual device of appointing special officers for the trial of the suits was resorted to.²⁶

About the attitude of Mangles,* Ramkamal Sen wrote in April, 1840 that Mangles had not changed his conduct. He was called or known by the name of "Gauntlet" and was, when in India, the most active to have the Resumption Law enforced in its full extent without any regard to the circumstances and locality. This rendered him unpopular to the Indians "who rejoiced at his departure to England and thought the evil coming from his hands as secretary to Government, terminated". But it appeared to Ramkamal that his rage and hostility to the Indians were still in operation. He was one of the first rate missionaries for the Hindus in his judicial capacity. "His proceeding was Mehomedan despotism." Ramkamal wrote that he told a friend discussing the right of the people "what the fellows call right, what we grant them is their right".²⁷

The Society, however, became a defunct body by the end of 1840s. "Nevertheless, it can claim to be parent of all subsequent political associations in India in the nineteenth century". The British-Indian Association, the Indian Association and even the Indian National Congress, * adopted its techniques of agitation in later years.²⁸ Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra on the 29th October, 1868 also told that the Landholders' Society gave to the people the first lesson in the art of fighting constitutionally for their rights, and taught them manfully to assert their claim and give expression to their opinions.²⁹

It should be noted here that the idea of forming a secular society to agitate against the baneful acts and deeds of the British Government in India by constitutional means might have originated in Dr. H. H. Wilson. But the Indian who took it up in right earnest and gave it a practical shape by liquidating the Dharma Sabha and by organising the Landholders' Society, a secular political organisation, was undoubtedly Ramkamal Sen. Though he collaborated with Bhabanicharan Banerjee of Dharma Sabha fame, he could rise above the narrow outlook of most of the leaders of traditional *dals* or groups existing at that period in Calcutta society and he had such dynamic outlook which enabled him to mobilize the landed aristocrats of different races, creeds and colours to stand behind a cause which was perfectly political in nature. Honestly, Ramkamal should be honoured as the man who was mainly responsible for organising agitation from a secular platform by constitutional means for the first time in India. *

Ramkamal brought with him the influential Dharma Sabha members. Through Prasanna Kumar with whom he worked in several organisations, he could mobilize Dwarkanath and his friends. European landholders to protect their own interest co-operated, if not for anything else. Thus Ramkamal's efforts became successful the moment the Landholders' Society came into existence, the first political organisation in India, though absolutely elitist in character. The most interesting point to note was that Dewan Ramkamal himself had practically no interest in land. He was never a zamindar. Radhakanta, Dwarkanath and Prasanna Kumar, his contemporaries, had extensive zamindari properties. *

Reference Notes

1. Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Kamalalaya*, Prathama Taranga, Calcutta, 1230 B.S., p. 47.
2. Ibid., p. 54.
- * On the subject of the Hindu practice of taking sick people to the river side to die Prasanna Coomar Tagore wrote : "From the time of the celebrated reformer Raja Rammohun (I had the honour of being his co-adjutor), I always entertained the opinion :—Let us begin the good work, and, as education spreads the gradual disappearance of all objectionable superstitious practices will be the necessary result. *Any authoritative interference* will only make the people more obstinate in their adherence to the practice". J. W. Furrell, *The Tagore Family—a Memoir*, London, 1882, pp. 134-135.
3. J. W. Furrell, *The Tagore Family, a Memoir*, London, 1882, pp. 134-135.
4. S. N. Mukherjee, *Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-38. Elites in South Asia*, ed. B. Leach & S. N. Mukherjee, Cambridge, 1970, p. 74.
5. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 271.
6. S. N. Mukherjee, *Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-38. Elites in South Asia*, ed. F. Leach & S. N. Mukherjee, Cambridge, 1970, p. 75.
7. Ibid., p. 74.
8. Ibid., p. 75.
9. Dr. Wilson's letter to Ramkamal, 25th September, 1835, quoted in P. C. Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ram Comul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880 pp. 18-19.
10. *The Samachar Darpan*, April 30, 1836, quoted in Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed. *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1384, B.S., pp. 595-596.
11. *The Samachar Darpan*, October 14, 1837, quoted in Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed. *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1384, B.S., p. 405.
12. *The Samachar Darpan*, November 18, 1837, quoted in Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed. *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1384 B.S., pp. 405-406.
13. Prasanna Kumar Tagore, *Bhumyadhikari Sabhar Britanta*, Prathama Bhaga, Calcutta, 1245 B.S., p. 41.
14. *The Reformer*, November 14, 1837, quoted in B. B. Majumdar, *History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda (1821-84)*, Vol. I, Bengal, 1934, p. 163.
- * Economic and political interests had brought the bhadraloks together to organise protest meetings and sign petitions from time to time. In 1826 it was against the Jury Act, in 1827 against the Stamp duties, in 1828 against the resumption of la-ki-raj land and again in 1835 for the free press. But they had no secular political society to organize movements to further their cause. In 1833 it was suggested in a Bengali pamphlet issued by the Reformer, a liberal newspaper, that the Bengali zamindars should have such a society, but nothing came of it. A similar attempt by Kalinath Chaudhuri and Ramlochan Ghosh and some members of the Brahmo Samaj also failed. Their society, Banga Bhasa Prakasika Sabha, founded in December, 1836, became a defunct body by January, 1837.

- S. N. Mukherjee, *Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-38. Elites in South Asia*, ed. E. Leach & S. N. Mukherjee, Cambridge, 1970, p. 76.
15. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 26th January, 1838. MSS Eur. E. 301/2.
 16. Prasanna Coomar Tagore, *Bhumyadhikari Sabhar Britanta*, Prathama Bhaga, Calcutta, 1245 B.S., p. 5.
 17. Ibid., p. 10.
 18. Ibid., p. 11.
 19. Ibid., p. 30.
 - * Many noted Indians and Europeans sat in the committee of the Society, because Britons had, by virtue of the Charter Act, 1833, been empowered to purchase lands like the children of the soil and allowed to live there permanently. In fact by 1838, the land interests of the Britishers grew so much in volume that they did not hesitate to join the Indian landholders to safeguard their own interest. But this did not long continue due to discriminatory legislation between Indians and Britishers.—J. C. Bagal, *History of the Indian Association, 1876-1951*, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 1-2. Theodore Dickens, Geo. Prinsep, David Hare, Dwarkanath Tagore, Radhakanta Deb, Prasanna Coomar Tagore, Ramkamal Sen, Munshi Muhammed Amir, etc. were among the members of the Society.
 20. *The Friend of India*, March 15, 1838.
 21. Ibid., March 22, 1838.
 22. Ram Gopal Sanyal, *Reminiscences and Anecdotes of Great Men of India, Both Official and Non-Official for the Last One Hundred Years*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1895, p. 15.
 23. B. B. Majumdar, *Indian Political Associations and Reform of Legislature (1819-1917)*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 24.
 24. Asiatic Intelligence, July 1838, quoted in B. B. Majumdar, *History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda*, (1821-84), Vol. I, Bengal, Calcutta, 1934, pp. 163-64.
 25. *The Friend of India*, March 15, 1838, Prospectus of a Society to be called Landholders' Society, Rule No. 6.
 26. J. W. Furrell, *The Tagore family—a Memoir*, London, 1882, pp. 86-87.
 - * Mangles, Ross Donnelly (1801-1877)
Son of James Mangles; born 1801; educated at Eton and Haileybury; came to India in 1820; after some minor appointments, he became, in the Burmese war of 1825, Secretary to the Commissioner of Pegu and Ava, and in 1826, Deputy Secretary in the Judicial and Territorial Departments; in 1832, Deputy Secretary in the General Department; Secretary to the Government of Bengal in the Judicial and Revenue Departments, 1835-1839; in 1838, also a Member of the Board of Revenue; retired in 1839; was M. P. for Guildford, 1841-58 etc.
C. E. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, London, 1906, p. 273.
 27. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 18th April, 1840, MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
 - * The British Indian Association was established in 1851, the Indian Association in 1876, and the Indian National Congress in 1885.
 28. S. N. Mukherjee, *Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-38. Elites in South Asia*, ed. E. Leach and S. N. Mukherjee, Cambridge, 1970, p. 77.

29. B. B. Majumdar, *Indian Political Association and Reform of Legislature* (1818-1917), Calcutta, 1965, p. 24.

* The final result of the agitation was that circular orders were issued by the Board of Revenue, so far modifying the obnoxious law as to exempt from its operation religious endowments, lands held rent-free since 1790 and parcels of land of not more than fifty bighas in a single village. J. W. Furrell, *The Tagore Family—a Memoir*, London, 1882, p. 89.

- * Radhakanta Deb (1784-1867) was the son of Raja Gopeemohun Deb and the grandson of Moonsee, afterwards Maharaja Nabakrishna Deb. In 1778, Nabakrishna was granted the taluk of Sutanuti, which amounted to an exclusive right to collect the ground rent and grant *pattas* or leases in Sutanuti, representing the greater part of North Calcutta or the Indian Town. Pradip Sinha, *Calcutta in Urban History*, Calcutta, 1978, p. 68.

Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846) also purchased zamindaries and sought to combine the role of an enlightened zamindar with that of a modern entrepreneur. N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal, 1793-1848*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1970, p. 119.

When the Union Bank failed as also the Carr Tagore & Co., the family of this Bengali entrepreneur could be saved from ruin and could prosper only because he could leave extensive house property in Calcutta ... and extensive zamindaries throughout Bengal. N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal, 1793-1848*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1970, p. 125.

Prasanna Coomar Tagore (1801-1868), son of Gopeemohun Tagore and the grandson of Darpanarayan Tagore, had extensive zamindary properties. "Never did a splendid patrimony fall into worthier hands than the share of Darpanarayan's property to which his second son, Gopeemohun ... succeeded." Darpanarayan purchased "immense property of parganeh Ootter Seroorper. The lands which were included under the designation, and which formed part of the estates of the Rajah of Rajshahi, then in the hands of the well known Rani Bhubani, covered an area of no less than 249 sq. miles."

J. W. Furrell, *The Tagore Family—a Memoir*, London 1882, pp. 62-64.

Section—II

Attitude Towards British Rule

Ramkamal was always forthright in giving expression to his reactions to various questions affecting his own country to his friend Dr. H. H. Wilson. He stated in February, 1840 that Dr. Wilson had hardly anything to write him about "except political matters connected with this country". "As to the description of the state of the country" wrote Ramkamal that he saw primarily "the dark side without thinking and allowing the consequence". It meant that Ramkamal was highly critical of the British administration in India and he was bold enough to express his views to his English friend.

Ramkamal stated that the Indians were not considered by the Britishers "capable of" understanding "political events". But Indians, in his opinion, were "anxious to see the administration of justice duly performed, abuses removed, information and knowledge of the facts obtained, merit rewarded and knowledge spread". These were also the expectations of Ramkamal from the British administration in India. But he stated that when the defects in administration were presented out, the answer received was that the Government was busy about "this and that". There was "no means or rather want of means". The Government could not be expected to do "all at once" but would do when there was "money". Though he was the initiator of politics of petition in India, it seemed that he himself was not very happy about the outcome of it.

Dr. Wilson might ask him whether the Government had not already done something to remove the defects. In answering this, Ramkamal hoped that Dr. Wilson would not think him "to be a radical", for, in his opinion, the Government had done "what it could" the Government however, did "not do what it ought". "The means of the country" wrote Ramkamal was "misapplied" and it was spent upon trials and experiments of system upon system and the Government's attention was occupied "with political arrangement with its neighbours". The time of the rulers was engaged in "European matters, appointments, settling disputes etc."

Lord Auckland (1836-1842) had been at the head of the Government for four years, a considerable portion of which was taken by him

to know the state of the country and he became master of necessary knowledge. He was given an offer to reside at Simla and Ramkamal had information that as soon as Lord Auckland would come back, he would prefer to return to England. A new Governor General would come and he too would follow the example.

Ramkamal believed that there were a few men of experience and information about the Government. Appointments and allowances were the principal objects. The collectors were magistrates. Young civilians were joint magistrates. The Secretaries to the Government were youngmen of limited experience. The *Hawkims* never saw the countries over which they presided. The judges were ignorant of the languages, customs and manners of the people for whom they administered justice.¹ The police and the *adalats*, were in his opinion "growing worse and worse",² Ramkamal asked Dr. Wilson whether or not "all these operate against the countries and people".³

"If we are to be governed by a foreign Government the English is preferable" wrote Ramkamal. His preference for the British Government in India was simply because, the "principle" of the Government appeared to him "excellent". The object of the system was "good and proper". But at the same time he stated that the "practice" was "different". "It proposes one thing and acts contrary". Therefore the administration required "modification and attention, for want of which people suffer".⁴ Ramkamal expressed similar sentiments again in November, 1840.⁵

Ramkamal was thus clearly of opinion that the British Government in India was based on sound principles of administration but he also noticed that those high sounding principles were not properly operated. The British Government in India, according to him, could not prosper because of the lapses on its operational part. In this sense he may be called a forerunner of moderate politicians of the late nineteenth century.

From his own statements it would appear that to Ramkamal Sen, the British rule in India never appeared as something like a divine dispensation. He was no blind worshipper of the British Raj. In comparison with the rules of other colonial powers, the British rule might have been considered by him "preferable". He was, however, severely aggrieved because Indian administration was being run by inexperienced and ignorant British officials. "Foreign and political" matters consumed the time of the Governors General while the country suffered for lack of attention and care on the part of the

Rulers. "We are aware", wrote he, "of the difference of opinion between the Court of Directors and the Board of Control and on this collision we are suffering".⁶

While Ramkamal criticized the British Government in India, he was not blind to the defects of his own countrymen. His national feelings did not engulf his consciousness. The medieval attitude to life was very much in operation even among the wealthy enlightened men of Calcutta, the centre of British administration in India. Lack of national feelings among them pained him much.

In April, 1840, Ramkamal stated that he was happy to learn that Mr. Bayley was the Chairman of the India House. But he was not sure how the Indians would gain by his appointment. Petition had to be sent to England to remove the grievances of the people. But the Indians were "dilatatory and dormant". If they could represent their "want and grievance and solicit for redress and consideration, a volume would not be enough—but I tell you candidly", continued Ramkamal, there was "no combination, concurrence, no unity of opinion to start any question and dispose it in a proper way". He then analysed Indian society, existence of different classes, their characteristics and attitudes to questions affecting the people in general.

Zamindars, in his estimation, were "ignorant and stupid". They were always forward to take pains for anything they were individually interested in. A landholder would rather "expend 2,00,000 Rupees to get a cause decreed in his favour by bribing the judges and their *amlahs* than make an appeal to the authorities in London to remove the evil" under which they generally laboured.

Ramkamal in this connection mentioned a very interesting point. The zamindars living in the *mofussil* did not "place confidence in Calcutta people" whom they considered "a quite different race of people entirely devoted to the interest of the Englishmen". There was possibly much truth in the statement. Reasons would not be wanting to form such an idea from the behaviour of the Calcutta *baboos* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The growth of the neo-rich class in Calcutta in the period mentioned was largely due to the patronage of the Englishmen. But when the society was changing Ramkamal wanted them to change their outlook too.

Tradesmen were generally "illiterate" and could not "appreciate the value of union and measures on public ground." They were afraid of coming to "act in any public matter".

The merchants were very few. They had "not a vestige of public spirit or energy". They were content with their occupation and if they could "make any profit" they were "contented".

The people in servitude—they were in fact slaves. They dared not do anything so that their masters were displeased and turned them out.

"The fifth class" wrote Ramkamal was "divided into two". First, the persons in independent circumstances and had no reason to fear. They were "possessing fortune but no ability or talent, such as *Banias*, *Tantees* etc." Secondly those who were "in servitude before" but came "out of it". They had "abilities but no money". They were poor.

These were the people. They also might do something. But they were not heard. Interestingly enough, some of them were suspected "as taking interest in private for acts and measures of Government and coming amongst us merely to gain information" and as soon as they obtained an office they left "our association, of this Russomoy is a strong example". He had been made a commissioner of the Court of Requests—1200 Rupees a month*—"he would do nothing and dare not join even a common petition to remove an evil". Dwarkanath was "a great merchant, more ready to do a thing to gain popularity amongst Europeans rather than starting anything himself and to be originator". About himself Ramkamal said that his case was different. He had nothing to fear or expect favour being under officers of Government as well as merchants. But his time was much engaged and his health was gradually failing. His labour and anxiety was likely to kill him if he did not die of a natural disease of the country.

He was not satisfied with the rising generation. These young men had learnt nothing to change their own fortune. Naturally the society could expect very little from them.'

Ramkamal wrote in November, 1840 that almost all the information conveyed to the authorities in London by Europeans were from two descriptions—"from interested and offended". Europeans in and out of service who appeared to take interest for India and its people were generally dissatisfied and disappointed by the local Government but if they obtained the object in view and realised their hope, they were as ever to treat the Indians and their interest with indifference. Ramkamal was at a loss to understand how to keep the Leaden Hall Proprietors informed of the real circumstances and situation of Indians.

Dr. Wilson had stated that the statement to be submitted must

"be true and fact". Ramkamal pointed out that the "facts when viewed in different light by biased judgement" might be considered as untrue. If India's case was represented either directly or indirectly without being sure of the Court's listening to it, the writer would place himself in an awkward situation if discovered by the Government here, he would be "treated as a marked man". This fear deterred the Indians "from declaring and crying out against the acts and proceedings of the *mafussil* Courts' inefficiency".

Dr. Wilson wrote to Ramkamal that the best friend the Indians had in the Court of Directors desired information. He "should be kept apprized of the real state of the country and feeling of the people".⁸ Dr. Wilson certainly referred to Bayley as the best friend of Indians. Ramkamal in reply stated that at the head of the Court was Bayley and he dared say that he would do all that would come in his official way for bettering the condition of the people. But Ramkamal did not know whether the other Directors did take and were able to take the same interest with Bayley and in this respect he "would not conceal the idea and feeling of the people". The people asked who the other Directors were in the Court.

"The public papers announced the nomination of Sir J. Bryant, Mr. Hogg and Coll. Galloway". The first and third might be "good soldiers and would do good to the military matters" and the second was "a very good Register of the Supreme Court" if there was "one like here in London to give him £2,000 a month". But did "they know of revenue, judicial and statistical matters of the country" which required change? "He (Mr. Hogg) never moved out of Calcutta, unacquainted with any Asiatic language and...he did not, while in India, consider the natives...as men but something like brutes. Such a Director to do no good".⁹

Thus Ramkamal held Bayley in high esteem but he was sure that nothing good would come out of his management because he was surrounded by such men as had no administrative experience and knowledge of the country. His sober analysis of the Board of Directors and critical comments on its composition clearly demonstrate the depth of his sympathy for the well-being of his countrymen. Ramkamal's acute realism is really astonishing.

If Ramkamal was well aware of the composition of the Court of Directors and was critical of the expectations from it, he was not less interested in understanding the implications of the imperialist wars waged by the British Government in India.

Ramkamal's reactions to wars launched by the British Power in India had been best illustrated in his letters dated 12th May, 1842, 4th July, 1842 and 18th January, 1844.

In May, 1842, he wrote to Dr. Wilson that the Cabul disaster appeared to have produced a greater sensation in England than in India, "though the misfortune which happened to the army had not been known to you on the date of your letter". From the situation of the country and circumstances of the proceedings many here in India "expected the unsuccessful result at the end".

"The war as I tell you was not necessary". At least it was unnecessary to cross the Indus and attack a country where the Government could get nothing and could not subdue the spirit of the people. It would not be able to improve the country and its inhabitants without "a very great expense, labour and loss of lives". Ramkamal continued that "the ostensible purpose...assigned by Lord Auckland was to put Shah Shooja to the throne and thereby check the Russian progress". But the circumstances proved that the reason originally assigned for declaring hostilities was not true. After Cabul was taken the greater part of the army was sent back and the remainder retained to keep possession of the country. Shah Shooja was cipher on the throne, the officers brought their families and began to have estates, gardens and houses etc. and "thus manifested a sign that the country was taken for benefit of the English".

When the cold season came the Afghans rose in every direction. They murdered Sir A. Burnes and then invited or allowed the envoy to come over to their tents to make terms or to be murdered. The consequences and the subsequent acts and their conduct were "horrid and lamentable to be related. 12,500 souls were destroyed by sword, snow and want of covering, clothing and starvation etc. of which 7,500 were camp followers. The men, women and children were killed by men, women and children in the villages like children torturing the frogs in play".

Ramkamal expressed regret over such an incident. He remarked that this was "a great misfortune, unparalleled disgrace and a great drawback upon the revenue of Bengal". There was war in China, hostilities threatened from the Burmese, the Nepalese were not quiet, there was something going on in the Deccan and Bundelkhand.¹⁰ In July he remarked that the military appeared to have more to do than its strength was able to do.¹¹

In January, 1844 Ramkamal stated that Lord Ellenborough (1842-1844) was at Gwalior, a peace or arrangement was just made with that country after a severe but unfortunate engagement with the Marhattas in which many hundred lives had been lost.

Ramkamal understood clearly the character of the British Government in India. Extension of territories through local wars was the main aim of the Government and the aim would be achieved with the assistance of Bengal revenue. He wrote that the Hindustan would "not be in peace for some or many years more". The resources of the country would "be consumed in war and military movements".

"We thought after Cabul war" that there would be "no hostility nor extension of territories. But the thirst is unquenchable". The Governor General appeared to him to be "more fond and bent for extension—more than his predecessors".* His whole attention and time were applied to politics. "The improvement and amelioration" of the people, appeared to him to be "laid aside".¹²

It appears therefore that Ramkamal could not support the imperialist war launched by the Government of India. Pacifist as he was, he could not appreciate the frittering away of the resources of the country in wars made for satisfying the imperialist thirst. It was really painful for him to find that the Bengal revenue was being wasted to satisfy the imperial vanity when many constructive things could be done for the people with that money.

In this connection Ramkamal's reactions to British economic policies towards Indian industry, agriculture and commerce etc. would be of some interest. In 1840 in a letter, he stated that the Court of Directors after 50 years was trying to find "measures to be adopted for raising cotton and other staples in the country after grinding the industry and energy of trade and commerce to dust".¹³ Ramkamal's reaction to the British policies towards India's age old industry was purely nationalistic in tone and temper. Ramkamal had the eye to see that the establishment of the British rule had struck a heavy blow on indigenous industry and this added to the misery of the people. In 1841, he wrote that the British goods were forced upon Indians "with all the advantage to the British Commerce. The Asiatick produce must not be allowed to go in return without 50 percent higher duty. It is cetrainly...a refusal of justice."¹⁴

In the same letter he mentioned that trade was brisk and the people were making money. He was afraid because he thought that

the "old days might return" and the storm was "again gaining ground". Almost everyone (both European and Indian) was doing business beyond their means and capacity—great many of them with borrowed means. The public treasury was not full. The silver importation from the East being partial and unless the authorities in England sent silver and gold and if there was an extraordinary change in the market of Europe, Ramkamal should not be "surprised to see failure again", though the bankrupts might remain unshaken for the pernicious and baneful system of law. "They will not be dragged to the court for debt or nothing will be obtained by prosecution and the instruments will have to whigwash themselves..."¹⁶ The apprehension expressed by this veteran Dewan came true after a lapse of only 7 or 8 years. The thunder clouds which Ramkamal had the eyes to see, did actually burst upon the business world in 1848.

Again Ramkamal was perhaps one of the few Indians who could realise that the British power had been draining huge wealth from India. The drain theory which became a handy weapon at the hands of the Indian Nationalists in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was not unknown to Ramkamal as would be evident from the letter written by him on the 8th May, 1841 where he stated that gold and silver was being "drained away" from India. But Ramkamal also believed that the British Government had been bringing about some improvements in the economic sphere. In 1835, Dr. Wilson mentioned to Ramkamal that if the discovery of tea turned out well, it would be a great thing for the north-east part of the country at least, but some time must elapse before much could be expected.¹⁶ About the cultivation of tea in Assam, Ramkamal in 1840 opined that it would be "a long time to have Assam tea as an article of commerce for this country". "I was a member of the committee* from the beginning and just relieved, the Committee being dissolved". The Government had transferred the tracks with its establishment to the Tea Company.¹⁷ About the growth of tea and exportation of it from Assam, he wrote in 1841 that no benefit would "likely to be felt by the present generation more than the communication through land with Assam and China".¹⁸

Regarding steam navigation Ramkamal wrote that the "the Hindus" did not care much whether it was generally established or not. They had no sons, daughters or wives in England that they "should write or have letters in 52 days". But it would be useful to them when they would go, visit Europeans or send children to the educated there. Perhaps this would "open our intercourse and teach us to go

by steam, but we must have first money and object of visiting England". "For my part", stated Ramkamal, "I wish to travel first in India before I think of going to England which is expensive and cold".¹⁹ •

Ramkamal Sen had no speculative or abstract political philosophy as such of his own. He had not even any definite scheme for the better Government of the country. He believed that the principles of the British Government were good. But no where did he explain what those principles were. In the middle ages, under the Rajputs and Mahammedans there was absolutely no guarantee of civil liberty in India. From the beginning of the British rule, the Government "aimed at securing the enjoyment of civil liberty for their subjects"²⁰ and the people of Bengal enjoyed a limited measure of civil liberty under the aegis of the British Government. On this ground primarily the enlightened Indians appreciated the British rule in India in the early nineteenth century. Right to life, right to property, right to freedom of religious worship etc. were generally held to be the civil rights. Ramkamal, an enlightened Indian, appreciated the British rule possibly on this ground. Moreover, the principles of British justice were also acclaimed by the Indians.

Ramkamal always thought in terms of the people in general. Bentham was not unknown to him. He wanted to see the greatest good of the greatest number and he expected the Government to live up to that ideal. He desired earnestly that the improvement and amelioration of the people of India should be the principal objective of the Government but his dissatisfaction and disillusionment grew because there was a great disparity between the profession and the practice. He repeatedly complained that the practice of the Government was bad and the administration required changes suitable to the country. He pointed out where and how India was being exploited and dishonoured.

The annihilation of India's age old cotton industry, imposition of unequal terms of trade, drainage of gold and silver, misapplication of the revenue of Bengal, pernicious laws protecting bankrupt British merchants, insolent conduct of the British officials, hollowness of Britain's civilizing mission, corruption and inefficiency of the judiciary and capping them all the unquenchable thirst of imperialism for territories—none of these could escape the notice of Ramkamal Sen. He could not therefore hold the view that the Indians were fortunately placed by Providence under the protection of the whole British nation. Instead he discerned and identified the fundamental objectives of the

British power in India which were sadly enough basically crude and selfish. Therefore his opinions were brutally frank, logically sound and at the same time emotionally surcharged.

The content, tone and temper of his statements relating to political and economic matters affecting India revealed Ramkamal Sen as a nationalist in the garb of a Dewan. It was all the more significant that he voiced the sentiment of a nationalist in an age "when the idea of nationalism was just coming to the forefront with all the intolerance of a new creed".²¹ It may appear surprising but it is a fact that Ramkamal adjudged the political and economic issues from a nationalist standpoint when many European countries like Germany and Italy had only a rudimentary consciousness of nationalism.

Reference Notes

1. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 14 February, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
2. Ibid., Calcutta, 28 November, 1835. MSS Eur. E. 301/2.
3. Ibid., Calcutta, 14 February, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., Calcutta, 15 November, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
6. Ibid., Calcutta, 14 February, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
- * The Senior Commissioner of the Court of Requests received a salary of Rs. 1,400/-, the Junior Commissioner of Rs. 1,200/- a month. "The latter is a Native Gentleman, Baboo Russomoy Dutt . . ." J. C. Marshman, *Bengal As It is, The Calcutta Review*, Vol. III, January—June, 1845, p. 208.
7. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 18 April, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
8. Ibid., Calcutta, 15 November, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., Calcutta, 12 May, 1842. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
11. Ibid., Calcutta, 4 July, 1842. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
- * "Ellenborough was more military than the soldiers". George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India 1784-1858*, London, 1961, p. 188.
12. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 18 January, 1844, MSS Eur. E. 301/5.
13. Ibid., Calcutta, 14 February, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
14. Ibid., Calcutta, 8 May, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
15. Ibid.
16. P. C. Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 18.
 * In his minute on the cultivation of tea plant within the British possessions in India. Lord William Bentinck on the 24th January, 1834 wrote that the subject was first urged upon his notice in London immediately after he received his appointment "by a very intelligent Gentleman of the name of Walker".
 Mr. Walker's proposition to the Directors of the East India Company to the cultivation of tea in British territories in India was that the commercial relations of England with China had assumed a character of uncertainty, by no means corresponding to the importance of the trade or consistent with the dignity of the British empire. This unsatisfactory state of affairs had originated from a combination of causes and occurrences spread over a long series of years. In his opinion, it was of considerable national importance that some better guarantee should be provided for the confirmed supply of this article. Although the Chinese had a monopoly, it would be easy for Britons to destroy it.
 It appeared to Lord Bentinck that both the President of the Board of Control as well as the East India Committee had the subject under their consideration. He therefore proposed that a committee should be formed for the purpose of submitting to Government a plan for the accomplishment of the object and for the superintendence of its execution.
 A committee was appointed and Ramkamal Sen became one of the members of the said committee.
 Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons. Cultivation of Tea Plant within the British Possessions in India, 1839. pp. 5-7.
17. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 18 April, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
18. Ibid., Calcutta, 8 May, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
19. Ibid., Calcutta, 20 January, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
20. Biman Behari Majumdar, *History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda (1821-84)*, Vol. I. Bengal, Calcutta, 1934, p. 3.
21. Ibid., p. 21.

6

Ramkamal and Educational Institutions

Section—I

The Hindu College

It would not be of much use to us to begin our discussion with the problem whether the Hindu College had its origin in the mind of Sir Edward Hyde East¹ or in the mind of David Hare.² The reality was that after some private meetings and discussions, Sir Edward Hyde East, the then Chief Judge of the Supreme Court convened a public meeting in his house on the 14th of May, 1816 with a view to establishing an academic institution for the education of Hindu youths. The meeting was largely attended by respectable Indian and European Gentlemen and also by eminent *pundits* of the town. Sir Edward explained to the meeting the necessity of an educational institution for the Hindu youths and his proposal was received with approbation. On the 21st May, 1816 in an adjourned meeting it was decided that the institution should be named "The Hindu College" of Calcutta.³ The primary object of this institution was the tuition of the sons of respectable Hindus "in the English and Indian languages, and in the literature and science of Europe and Asia".⁴

There can be no doubt that at the initial stage of its birth Sir Edward played an important role. Considering the object of the institution and its name one would like to leave aside the speculative theories about its origin and would be inclined to share the view that the institution owed "its origin to the intelligence and public spirit of some of the opulent native Gentlemen of Calcutta"⁵ who were obviously Hindus. These Gentlemen held private meetings and discussions and ultimately with the co-operation of some respectable Europeans established the seminary known as the Hindu College for the instruction of the sons of respectable Hindu families in the European and Asiatic languages and sciences.

The original committee of managers was very large. It was composed of ten Europeans* and twenty Indians. Sir Edward Hyde

East was the President. H. H. Wilson was on the committee. The college was opened on the 20th January, 1817 in a house hired for the purpose at Garanhatta (afterwards 304, Chitpur Road), Calcutta.* The Committee was able to collect Rs. 1,13,179/-.⁶ Ramkamal Sen was a subscriber to the funds of the college.⁷

Ramkamal's direct connection with the college began in the month of July, 1821. Baidya Nath Mukherjee, the Indian Secretary of the college wrote to the committee that it would be very desirable and add greatly to the interest of the institution if any of the managers would frequently visit and superintend the duty of the school. But as he was well aware that none of the managers could spare sufficient time for the purpose, it would be a good plan to appoint an additional manager who would attend particularly to that duty and Ramkamal Sen who was already a subscriber was very competent for that purpose. He, therefore, proposed Ramkamal Sen to fill the situation of superintending manager.⁸ The proposal of the Indian Secretary was accepted by the managing committee and Ramkamal began to serve the institution as its "Superintending Director" from July, 1821.⁹

The Hindu College issued a certificate for the first time to its alumnus, Harimohan Dey. This certificate was given under the signatures of the European Secretary, the Head Teacher, and four Directors of the college. Ramkamal Sen was a signatory to that document.¹⁰

In May, 1819, the managers of the college invested Sicca Rs. 60,000 with Messrs Baretto & Sons, the Treasurers of the college, at 8 per cent for six years.¹¹ The firm, Messrs Baretto & Sons went into liquidation and in 1823, the Hindu College had Rs. 65,000 only.¹² This amount yielded an interest of Rs. 400/- per mensem.¹³ Therefore, for pecuniary assistance, the managers sent a petition to the Governor General in Council in June, 1823. Apart from pecuniary assistance, the managers were also greatly in want of a suitable building for the college. They wanted the college to be removed to the vicinity of the Sanskrit College about to be established under the immediate care of the Government. On July 17, 1823, the Government agreed to build a house for the college close to the Sanskrit College.¹⁴ The foundation stone was laid on the 25th February, 1824 with full masonic honour.¹⁵ The building was to house both the Sanskrit College and the Hindu College. But the two institutions were kept quite distinct in buildings and managements. The General Committee of Public Instruction was appointed by the Government on the 31st July, 1823 to supervise the educational establishments and also to disburse funds on their behalf.¹⁶

Ramkamal's friend and philosopher H. H. Wilson was appointed Junior Member and Secretary to the General Committee of Public Instruction. Ramkamal Sen was working as the Assistant to the General Committee of Public Instruction.¹⁷ Ramkamal Sen "planned the Sanskrit College and the patshala. . . ."¹⁸

When the Government provided separate space for the Hindu College and agreed to give financial assistance to the same, they naturally desired to control the affairs of the college. This was highly disagreeable to some managers who did not appreciate the Governmental interference in the affairs of the college. Thus a highly critical time for the college came. At this juncture Ramkamal gave a workable formula satisfying both the parties and the proposal of Ramkamal was ultimately accepted. Thus during a period of crisis and great peril Ramkamal had that balanced attitude which could save the college from utter destruction.¹⁹ On 1st July, 1824 the managers proposed a joint committee of equal numbers but reserving a right of veto for the Indian managers. The General Committee of Public Instruction favoured only the appointment of H. H. Wilson, as visitor to the college.²⁰ The General Committee of Public Instruction requested the managers of the Hindu College to regard him "as the organ and representative of the General Committee".²¹ As Dr. Wilson was acceptable to the managers of the college they welcomed him. Though Ramkamal patched up the differences between the Indian managers and the Government, he could not stem the tide of governmental interference in the long run.

The managers of the college were made Honorary Members of the General Committee of Public Instruction in 1835 and two of their members were taken on the committee.* A sub-committee consisting of six members of the General Committee of Public Instruction was appointed to supervise the college. Indian managers naturally could not view this action of the Government with favour. They kept together as a "distinct body" and retained "a large share of influence and patronage connected with the college in their own hands."²² The relationship between the Government and the managers of the college began to deteriorate. Ramkamal was one of those Indian members who could not appreciate the growing governmental interference with the management of the Hindu College. As a matter of fact, Ramkamal stood for some sort of autonomy for this educational institution and this is clearly evident from his letters to Dr. Wilson.

In September, 1840 he gave a picture of the administration prevailing during the period in the Hindu College. He wrote that the

Hindu College was suffering from continuous or successive changes. Capt. Richardson was the Principal and Middleton, the Headmaster. Ramkamal apprehended that Capt. Richardson would not recognise the managers of the college, in which case the managers would withdraw.²⁴ In November, he stated that the college was going on just as Dr. Wilson had conjectured and the Education Committee of the Government had entirely taken into their hands the management and superintendence of the tuition. They appointed anybody they liked and as soon as there was an opportunity of bettering the situation of a teacher, they recommended him without regard to the college which had been "a kind of landing place for destitute and hungry Europeans" to get livelihood until they could get something else. There was vacancy after vacancy. A new man came in with all the disadvantages to the college and as soon as he learned his business and service expected of him began to be useful, he left it.²⁴

David Hare who was then a Commissioner and Law Officer though he had very limited time for the college superintendence, interfered in everything. His word was "*Veda*" to the Committee of Public Instruction and also to the Governor General, who considered him "the most clever, talented and experienced European in this country for education."²⁵

There was no responsible person for the college. Capt. Richardson, Professor of Literature, had got the title of the Principal by the urgent request to the Governor General. This had offended the Headmaster Middleton who would not take any responsibility until part of his duty or labour was taken off from his hands and given to the Principal. But Capt. Richardson would take none unless the managers gave him higher salary and in the collision and difference the college had been suffering.²⁶

In 1841 another change in the management of the College was contemplated by uniting the committee of management of the Hindu College with the General Committee of Public Instruction just to bring the Hindu College management under the control of the Government. The intention of the Government was to liquidate the privileges of the managers of the college.²⁷ The tussle between the Government and the managers of the college did not come to an end during the life time of Ramkamal Sen.

Writing in February, 1843 about Sir Edward Ryan, the President of the General Committee of Public Instruction, Ramkamal stated that it was he who had deprived the Hindu College managers of their rights

and privileges. The system Sir Edward introduced was planned and prepared, kept ready and was not published until the day he left the country* which took the managers of the Hindu College by surprise when it was too late to remedy the evil and amend the disappointment. By his actions all the managers of the Hindu College became Government managers, visitors etc. and nothing could be done, nobody would hear grievance and render any justice except the Governor General in Council through the prescribed channel. On this issue Ramkamal expressed a desire to write more fully to Dr. Wilson.²⁸ He did not, however, write anything more on this subject. In his last letter, he only commented that the education affairs had undergone a complete change. The proceedings had become a matter of mere form.²⁹

On the 1st of May, 1826, H. L. V. Derozio was appointed teacher of the college.³⁰ Derozio was an excellent student of Dharamtala Academy of David Drummond. Drummond himself "was a scholar-poet, and a notorious free-thinker, an exile from his native land".³¹ Derozio was much influenced by his teacher Drummond. Previous to his appointment in the Hindu College, he was the Assistant Editor of the *India Gazette*.³² In January, 1827, the college had as many as fourteen teachers. Of the fourteen, four were Indians—two were for Bengali and Sanskrit and the other two were for Persian, H. L. V. Derozio was the 4th teacher and his monthly salary was Sicca Rs. 100/-.³³ He was the teacher of English Literature and History. He was undoubtedly a brilliant teacher of the college. His students were much influenced by Bacon, Hume and Tom Paine but the influence of Derozio over them was paramount.³⁴ He sometimes touched on "religious questions with too much freedom."³⁵

The Academic Association, a debating society* was started by Derozio and his students in 1828. Social and religious questions were freely discussed at the meeting of the society. They did not hesitate to express their contempt for traditional Hinduism.³⁶ *The Parthenon*, a magazine, was published on the 15th February, 1830. Derozio was the guiding spirit of the magazine. The leaders of the traditional society were naturally alarmed. H. H. Wilson, the visitor of the college, by an order suppressed the magazine after two issues were published.³⁷

The *Sambad Prabhakar*, published on the 15th April, 1831 a letter "reflecting in very unbecoming language upon the character of the teachers of the Hindu College". Laxminarayan Mukherjee, the Secretary to the Hindu College, requested the editor to inform him of the writer's name so that legal action might be taken against him.³⁸ Ishwar-chandra Gupta, the editor-proprietor of the *Sambad Prabhakar*, wrote

in reply that he was authorized in the name of the writer to inform the Secretary of the college that the writer neither had the least intention nor did he mean by the language of his letter to bring the college or the characters of its teachers and members as a body into hatred and contempt or ridicule.³⁹ The authorities of the Hindu College did not consider the letter as "altogether satisfactory".⁴⁰

When the controversy between the managing committee of the Hindu College and Ishwarchandra Gupta was at its height, Bhabanicharan Banerjee, the editor of the *Samachar Chandrika*, wrote an article in his journal in support of Ishwarchandra Gupta. In that article it was stated that about two hundred boys had stopped attending the college out of about four hundred and sixty students.⁴¹ There was much truth in this statement. James Prinsep in his report on the Hindu College for the year 1832 noted that Dr. H. H. Wilson attributed withdrawal of so many students in 1830-31 to a partial and temporary distrust on the part of the parents regarding supposed interference with religious opinion of the pupils, heightened by the conduct of the late Derozio, who had acquired a powerful ascendancy over the affections of the boys.⁴²

Another very interesting letter appeared in the *Sambad Prabhakar* on the 14th May, 1831. The author reported an incident when a Hindu College boy preferred to greet goddess Kali with a "good morning Madam".⁴³ "The addiction to drink in so many Derozians was a touch of weakness."⁴⁴

The activities of Derozio strained his relation with the Head Teacher D' Anselme. The managers of the college had to bring about a settlement between them on the 5th February, 1831. The Head Teacher might have been disturbed by the events which were taking place centering round his young colleague Derozio.⁴⁵

The situation was aggravated further by the announcement of a course of lectures on natural and revealed religion to be delivered by Duff and other missionaries at the residence of Duff which was very near to the Hindu College. The managers asked the students not to attend the societies where religious or political questions were to be discussed.⁴⁶

The traditional Hindu society of Calcutta was already agitated and disturbed by the abolition of Sati. Therefore the managers of the college became highly perturbed in the atmosphere created by a band of young men and their teacher Derozio. Under this context a special meeting of the managers of the college was called on Saturday, the 23rd April, 1831. The following members attended the meeting :

Chandra Coomar Tagore

H. H. Wilson

Radhamadhab Banerjee

Radhakanta Deb

Ramkamal Sen

Sri Kishen Sinh

Governor.

Vice President.

David Hare.

Russomoy Dutt.

Prasanna Kumar Tagore.

Laxminarayan Mukherjee
—Secretary.

The object of convening the meeting was the necessity of checking the growing evil and the public alarm arising from the very unwarranted arrangement and misconduct of a certain teacher in whom great many children had been interested and who, it appeared, had materially injured their morals and introduced some strange system the tendency of which was destructive to their moral character and to the peace in society.⁴⁷ A list of 25 pupils of respectable families who had been withdrawn was submitted to the meeting. There were no less than 160 boys absent some of whom were supposed to be sick but many among them were likely to be withdrawn by the guardians unless proper remedies were adopted. A list of them was also submitted. Some rules and arrangements were proposed for consideration. In item number 1, it was stated that Derozio being the root of all evils and cause of public alarm, should be discharged from the college and all communications between him and the pupils be cut off.⁴⁸ The managers discussed whether there were any just grounds to conclude that the moral and religious tenets of Derozio as far as ascertainable from the effects they had produced upon his scholars were such as to render him an 'improper person to be intrusted with the education of the youth'. Excepting Radhakanta and Ramkamal everyone else found nothing wrong with Derozio in this respect. The committee, therefore, proceeded to the consideration of the negative question whether it was expedient in the state of public feeling prevailing then amongst the Hindu community of Calcutta to dismiss Derozio from the college.⁴⁹ Chandracoomar Tagore, Radhakanto Deb, Ramkamal Sen and Radhamadhab Banerjee voted that it was "necessary". Russomoy Dutt and Prasanna Kumar Tagore voted that it was "expedient". It was Sri Kishen Sinh among the Indian managers who voted that it was "unnecessary". H. H. Wilson and David Hare did not take part in voting on the ground that the issue was such which affected the state of feeling of the people of this country. It was then resolved that the measure of Derozio's dismissal be carried into effect with due consideration for his merits and services.⁵⁰

On the question of expediency of removing Derozio from the college in the prevailing state of public feeling amongst the Hindus, all the Indian managers of the college excepting one were united. Four out of seven Indian managers thought it to be "necessary" while the two others considered it "expedient". The decision of dismissal could be carried into effect peacefully. The role of Prasanna Kumar would naturally attract our notice. It would be interesting to hold that in this case at least, the role of the conservatives and the role of the moderates were more or less the same. It was probable that the Bengali aristocrats of both the groups at that stage preferred not to give any more indulgence to radicalism even among a very small group of boys. Therefore they chose to defend the will of the traditional society by dismissing Derozio, the hero of the young radicals, from the Hindu College. If at all the followers of Raja Rammohan and the conservatives maintained any difference, it was just similar to the distinction between the two words "necessary" and "expedient" and nothing more. In a broad sense they meant one and the same thing and made no material difference. If Ramkamal was to be held responsible for the dismissal of Derozio, then Prosanna Kumar Tagore, a follower of Raja Rammohan, could not be reasonably spared.

Even after Derozio's dismissal withdrawal of boys from the college could be proved from the proceedings.⁵¹ It was simply because the reaction of the society continued for some time more. James Prinsep in his report for the year 1832 stated that all alarms had long since subsided and although reaction might be slow, an increase of confidence would eventually ensue from the judicious and prompt measures adopted by the college committee on that occasion.⁵²

Lord Bentinck's Resolution of the 7th March, 1835 made it clear that the funds for education would be employed on "English Education alone".⁵³ Previous to 1835 excepting the Hindu College all other big educational institutions supported by the Government were oriental in character.⁵⁴ The announcement of new educational policy created misapprehension about the fate of teaching of the vernacular languages. In the annual report of 1835 attempts were made to correct the misapprehension by stating that the phrases "English education" "English literature and science" were used not in opposition to vernacular education.⁵⁵ In spite of this statement of the Government, after 1835 instruction in the vernacular language was thrown somewhat into the shade.⁵⁶

J. C. C. Sutherland, the Visitor of the Hindu College, in his report for the year 1833 noted "a serious deficiency" which pervaded the institution. He alluded to the "neglect of the Bengalee language". He reported that in the lower classes many of the boys could scarcely read it and in the upper there were very few who had more than a colloquial knowledge of their mother tongue. He opined that the credit of the institution as well as the general interest of education required that its students should go forth with a knowledge of their own language.⁵⁷

Pursuing this policy Ramkamal Sen examined the students of the Hindu College in their knowledge of the Bengali language in the year 1840-41. He reported that the whole number of the students belonging to classes, which were examined were not present.

Some of the students of the 1st and 3rd classes in the Senior Department told Ramkamal that they could not translate the themes, given to them, as they did not understand the passages. But Principal Richardson who was present overruled their objections. The young men submitted but wanted the assistance of dictionary and interpretation, which Ramkamal agreed to furnish. With this indulgence they began translating from English into Bengali which they kept up till late, and even then the whole passage was not furnished.

Ramkamal was extremely sorry to record that the 1st and 2nd classes particularly, who attempted to render the pieces a literal translation, failed completely. Their productions had become unintelligible and wrongly spelt. Some of the writings were inferior to those furnished by the junior classes. The performance was the joint work of the whole classes, as they sat close to each other and copied the translations.

Ramkamal commented that the 1st and 2nd classes had confined their studies solely to English, and ceased to translate or read Bengali for a considerable length of time. Their excuse was that they had no time and no means given to them to prosecute the study or keep up the knowledge they had possessed in Bengali.

The next examination was in Bengali themes which they were required to translate into English. In this, they were allowed the assistance of the college *pundit* as well as a dictionary. The translation as far as they understood was correct, with the exception of some passages which appeared to have been misunderstood and misinterpreted. In short they appeared to understand English better than their

mother tongue, to which they attached little or no importance, preferring to concentrate on English.

About the boys of the Junior Department Ramkamāl reported that the 1st, 2nd and 3rd classes were examined both in English and Bengali. The Readers No. 4 and 5, which were their class books, were given them, and passages selected, which they translated with promptness. Bengali printed themes were also given them for translation, which—Ramkamāl had the pleasure to note—had been performed tolerably well, and the whole of the boys of this Department seemed to take pleasure and interest in the undertaking. The boys might do better, but they also complained that they were not furnished with means or time to study Bengali regularly.⁵⁸

The most unsatisfactory state of vernacular education made Ramkamāl thoroughly dissatisfied. The feeling of the most of the managers of the Hindu College was more or less the same. Therefore as a reaction, they decided to establish a Bengali *patsala* attached to the Hindu College. Ramkamāl got the field he wanted to experiment his educational ideas. He became thoroughly involved in the planning and management of this institution. In his letter dated the 20th January, 1840 he stated that the new *patsala* was to teach Bengali in an improved system used by *gurumahasaya* and also to communicate the knowledge of the West through the vernacular language. Books in English were to be translated into Bengali. The boys admitted were five to ten years of age. They were to pay a very small schooling charge monthly. The number already admitted was five hundred but the managers had applications for nearly one thousand. The *patsala* had ten classes and each class was composed of fifty students scaled like Hindu College. It had ten masters and the superintendent. Junior and Senior Departments were to be conducted after English system. The Education Committee had given no aid yet, but the managers had contributed to build a *pucca house* for the *patsala* in Pataldanga. There was a preparatory step for the boys who could afford to go to English education to be admitted into the Hindu College. The other object was to place means to learn European ideas and science through Bengali within the reach of the poor who could not afford the expenses and materials of English education.

Ramkamāl opined that English education was expensive and took time and “the bulk of the people” could not avail themselves of the English schools established by the Government and the missionaries. Those institutions could not and did not keep the boys for sufficient

time to give them a respectable knowledge in English and they neglected their own literature. They became common *keranees* and could do no good to the country. To remedy this evil, the managers made this attempt and hoped the Education Committee would establish Bengali *patsalas* in the *moofussal*. The expense would be small and boys to be taught would be competent to do the business of *moherer*, *moon-shee*, teacher, *tahusildar*, *sircar* etc. They would answer all purposes in the way of business. He requested Dr. Wilson to think upon the subject and give the managers of the college his counsel. Ramkamal also requested him to direct Thacker or a Bookseller to send a set of school books worth Rupees 100/- to him. He would pay to their house in India.⁵⁹

Ramkamal was ever solicitous for improving the standard of text books to be used in the *patsala*. He desired to co-ordinate the standard of text books to be prescribed here with those used in the schools of England.

In February 1840 Ramkamal wrote that the Government had at last discovered that knowledge could not be successfully communicated to the "mass of people" through a foreign tongue. The language of the country "must be employed" but as the Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit must remain undermined "the Vernacular Bengali and Oordoo" were to be taught and measures were to be taken to procure suitable books in these languages.⁶⁰ In April, 1840 he informed Dr. Wilson that Lord Auckland had written a long minute on education which had been printed but not to be published.⁶¹ Lord Auckland's minute on education dated the 24th November, 1839 addressed to the General Committee of Public Instruction might be considered as supplementary to Lord Bentinck's resolution.⁶² He wanted to strike a balance between the two opposite ideas current among the people connected with education. Lord Auckland took his stand in between the ideas propagated by the Orientalists and the Anglicists. He gave some incentives to the Oriental Colleges. On the question whether instruction should be conveyed in English or in vernacular language, Lord Auckland opined that it would be advisable to allow the students "to attend the full course of English or vernacular tuition as they might themselves prefer". It would not be indispensable to make either of the language compulsory.⁶³ Ramkamal Sen wrote in August, 1840 that English education had "rather fallen in tone and spirit."⁶⁴

In February 1841, Ramkamal stated that Lord Auckland took the interest in education at heart. He visited colleges in person and gave

prizes at his own expense.⁶⁵ In October, he wrote that vernacular was said to be improved. He did not know how Lord Auckland had given or proposed to give prizes from his pocket for composition in Bengali or write essays on subjects to be given by him.⁶⁶

Ramkamal was critical about Derozians. But he was never unkind to them. They also acknowledged that it was through the kindness of Ramkamal Sen, the then Secretary to the Sanskrit College, Calcutta that they obtained permission to use the Sanskrit College Hall for the meeting of the Society for the Acquisition of General knowledge, held on the 12th March, 1838.⁶⁷

In February, 1840 he remarked that he was discouraged by the example set by the students of the Hindu College. None of them yet had done anything for their country. They were "not for the living or dead, not for Science nor Arts". Ramkamal and his friends expected that the Derozians should take the places they occupied and give their assistance to the cause in which a few of the older generation were engaged. "But none would join nor assist". Again in April, 1840 he complained that as to the rising generation, the educated young men from the Hindu College and other Seminaries, he and his friends were "quite disappointed". They did not "help themselves much less they would help their countrymen". They were school masters and newspaper editors. There were about 12 such papers published daily and weekly. Deputy Collectorship was not to be had. They were contented "with good *khana pina*" if they could procure it. They did not join any society or body, whether European or Indian, engaged in any public object. Ramkamal or his friends could not get "any of them to assist...in preparing Bengali school books required for the new *patsala*".⁶⁸

Ramkamal's opinion on the life style of the Derozians was quite clear. He could neither like their mental attitude nor their activities. Ramkamal judged these educated young men in terms of their contribution to the cause of the country and her people.

Reference Notes

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2. S. Majumdar and G. Dhar ed., *Presidency College Register*, Calcutta, 1927, p. 1.
3. Mackay, *History of Native Education in Bengal*, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XVII, No. XXXIV, 1852, p. 343.
4. S. Majumdar and G. Dhar ed., *Presidency College Register*, Calcutta, 1927, p. 2.
5. Thomas Fisher, Comp., *Memoir on Education of Indians, Bengal Past & Present*, Vol. XVIII, January-June, 1919, p. 104.
- * European Members desired to withdraw in a body at the meeting of the committee held on the 11th June, 1817. But they wanted "to be considered as private friends to the Institution . . ."
- J. C. Bagal, *The Hindu College, Predecessor of the Presidency College, The Story of Its Foundation*, *The Modern Review*, July, 1955, p. 58.
- * The College was shifted from one house to another till it occupied on the 1st May, 1826 both wings of the Sanskrit College building constructed for the purpose of the Hindu College by the Government at Pataldanga, College Square, Calcutta. Central part of the Building was for the Sanskrit College and the two wings were for Senior and Junior Departments of the Hindu College.
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19. Mackay, *History of the Native Education in Bengal*, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XVII, No. XXXIV, 1852, p. 349.
20. S. Majumdar and G. Dhar ed., *Presidency College Register*, Calcutta, 1927, p. 6.
21. J. C. Bagal, *The Hindu College, The First Phase*, *The Modern Review*, September, 1955, p. 233.
- * Ramkamal was appointed member of the General Committee of Public Instruction in 1837 and again in 1840-41. J. Kerr, *A Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency from 1835 to 1851*, Part I, Calcutta, 1852, p. 25. In May, 1842, he informed Dr. Wilson that the Council of Education had at last asked him to be a permanent member of their Committee.
- [Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 12 May, 1842. MSS Eur. E. 301/4-

22. J. Kerr. *A Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency from 1835 to 1851*, Part II, Calcutta, 1853, p. 4.
23. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 18 September, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
24. Ibid., Calcutta, 15 November, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. J. Kerr, *A Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency*, from 1835 to 1851, Part II. Calcutta, 1853, pp. 4-5.
- * From 1823 to 1842, the General Committee of Public Instruction was the organ of the Government in all matters connected with education. The local committees were subject to the General Committee of Public Instruction.
- Important changes took place in 1842 on the occasion of Sir Edward Ryan resigning the office of President on retiring to England. Educational establishments were brought more directly under the control of the Government aided by a Council of Education. The superintendence of the Council of Education was confined to the institutions in Calcutta including the college at Hooghly and its branch schools.
- J. Kerr. *A Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency*, from 1835 to 1851, Part I, Calcutta, 1852, p. 22.
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- * 1828 according to Prof. Susobhan Chandra Sarkar and 1827 according to Kisorichand Mitra.
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- Selection of Discourses Delivered at the Meetings of Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1840, Preface, p. 1.
36. S. Majumdar and G. Dhar ed., *Presidency College Register*, Calcutta, 1927, pp. 8-9.
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38. Susobhan Chandra Sarkar, 'Extracts from the Proceedings of the Hindu College Committee Relating to the Dismissal of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio'. *The Presidency College Magazine*, Vol. 40, April, 1959, p. 6.
39. Ibid.
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41. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1384 B.S., pp. 14-15.

42. James Prinsep's Report for the Year 1832 to the General Committee of Public Instruction on the Hindu College, 28th February, 1833, Home Misc. 471.
43. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. II. Calcutta, 1384 B.S., p. 237.
44. S. C. Sarkar, *Derozio and Young Bengal, Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, ed. A. Gupta, Jadavpur, 1958, p. 19.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
46. S. Majumdar and G. Dhar ed., *Presidency College Register*, Calcutta, 1927, p. 9.
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59. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 20 January, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
60. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 14 February, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
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Section—II

The Sanskrit College

The Sanskrit College arose out of a resolution of the Bengal Government, passed in 1811, "to re-establish the Hindu Colleges" that had once flourished in Tirhut and Nadiya*, but which had fallen into decay under a foreign administration. It was ultimately deemed expedient to set up the institution in Calcutta. No change was however made in its character.¹

Lord Hastings (Earl of Moira) on the 21st August, 1821 decided to establish the Sanskrit College at Calcutta. A sum of Rs. 25,000/- was earmarked for this purpose annually.² The immediate object of the college was the cultivation of Hindu literature.³

The college was opened on the 1st January, 1824, and it functioned from a rented house at Bowbazar, Calcutta. The foundation stone of its new abode was laid on the 25th February, 1824 and the college occupied the new building on the 1st of May, 1826.⁴ Ramkamal Sen was associated with the Sanskrit College since its inception as its Accountant on a monthly pay of Rs. 40/-. Subsequently he became the Acting Secretary to the college in the vacant place of Capt. A. Troyer, who resigned on the 26th February, 1835. He was appointed Secretary on the 11th June 1835 on a pay of Rs. 100/-. He resigned his office on the 1st January, 1839. During this period of about four years, Ramkamal went on leave from the 13th December, 1836, to March, 1837, when Radhakanta Deb was appointed Acting Secretary to the College.⁵

Before he became the Secretary of the Sanskrit College Ramkamal had a significant role in the establishment of the hospital attached to the medical department of the institution. A medical class was attached to the Sanskrit College in December, 1826. In 1827 Dr. John Tytler was appointed to lecture on Mathematics and Anatomy. The class started with only 7 students. Khudiram Bisharada was the *pundit* of this class and he served the college upto April, 1830. Madhusudan Gupta was appointed in his place in May, 1830. The students belonging to the medical caste (*baidya*) of the Hindus had the choice, instead of entering the class of Logic to attend the medical lectures in Sanskrit as well as the English lectures on medicine, and they did not study Law.⁶

A hospital became necessary for the medical class and the authorities attached a little hospital to the Sanskrit College in 1832. J. Grant, the Superintendent, presented the first annual report for the year 1832 of the cases treated at the hospital to Major Troyer, the Secretary to the college on the 1st February, 1833. He reported that the students of the medical class having attained a respectable knowledge of elementary anatomy and physiology, the next point of importance was to give them some correct notions of Europeans medical and surgical practice. Although the senior class had undergone a course of lectures in the practice of physic, it soon became obvious that mere dry details, without direct personal reference to the phenomena of disease at the bedside of the sick, could make but a very fleeting impression on the minds of the students. It was felt that a hospital of some kind was absolutely necessary for the proper instruction of the students.

Accordingly, with the active assistance of Ramkamal Sen from whom J. Grant always derived the most valuable co-operation and who took a cordial interest in the welfare of the medical class, a hospital on the cheapest possible scale, was erected about the end of the year 1831 capable of accommodating thirty house patients.⁷

In his report for 1833, J. Grant stated that the number of house patients admitted during the year was eightysix and the number of out patients was one hundred and seventynine. He commented that he always derived "cordial and welcome co-operation" from Ramkamal Sen.⁸ Ramkamal's interest in medical establishments and medicines was great. It was his nature to assist any institution the object of which was the amelioration of the condition of the people of this country. But the hospital did not last long. Troyer, Secretary to the college, reported to the General Committee on the 10th February, 1834 that according to Dr. Tytler's* opinion a much greater success could be obtained if the students were aided in general by good books of science, English or translated into oriental languages and if in particular the acquirements of Anatomy, Surgery and Medicine were facilitated by human dissection and an opportunity of observing practice. The report spoke highly of Madhusudan Gupta by whom the Sanskrit instruction of the medical class was conducted.⁹

Troyer wrote to Tytler on the 12th March, 1834, desiring him to state his opinion as to whether it would be expedient to confine the medical instruction of the Sanskrit College to English lectures, and to adopt for class books solely English treatises upon Anatomy and Medicine discarding Sanskrit medical books altogether.

Tytler wrote a long letter on the 3rd April, 1834 addressed to Troyer, the Secretary. This letter was highly interesting. He wrote that he was decidedly of opinion that it would be inexpedient to abolish the Sanskrit Medical Class. Efforts should be directed to get translated and printed into English such a number of Sanskrit medical books as would enable the Government to judge fairly of their contents and to get translated into Sanskrit, complete system of European medicine and to take the most effectual means for enabling the Indians to comprehend and make use of it.¹⁰ The Government abolished the Sanskrit College Medical Class following the resolutions passed by the Governor General in Council in this respect on the 28th January, 1835.¹¹

During the Secretaryship of Ramkamal, J. C. C. Sutherland, Secretary to the General Committee of Public Instruction communicated their decision to abolish the English Department of the College.^{12*} On the 31st August, 1838 Ramkamal wrote to the General Committee of Public Instruction seeking permission to open a Bengali class to impart instruction in Arithmetic, European Natural Philosophy, Geography and History. Ramkamal suggested that works on these subjects translated into Bengali should be studied in this class. His another suggestion was that he necessary provision should be made for instruction in the regulations and forensic practices.¹³ The Government accepted his suggestions* and opened a Bengali class in the Sanskrit College.¹⁴

Ramchandra Vidyavageesha was appointed Professor of Law (Smriti) in the Sanskrit College on the 14th May, 1827. He was dismissed from his services in April, 1837 on the ground that he and some other *pundits* of the Sanskrit College gave a wrong *byabastha* or opinion on two legal points put to them by the Government on the 1st August, 1836. These points were related to a case concerning zamindari property of Biswambhar Pundit of Benares. Ramchandra submitted his opinion along with others to the Government on the 15 August. But the *byabastha* was considered erroneous by the Government. The Government decided that Prof. Ramchandra "be expelled" and others "be admonished" for the impropriety of their conduct.¹⁵ A *pundit* of the Benares College* was also connected with this case and he too was dismissed from his services. The dismissed *pundits* filed petitions to the Governor General in Council for the redress of their grievances. But the Governor General in Council rejected their petitions.¹⁶

Prabhatchandra Gangopadhyay wrote that Ramkamal Sen was

appointed Secretary to the Sanskrit College in 1835 and immediately after his appointment he was trying hard to influence Ramchandra, a friend of Raja Rammohan Ray. But Ramkamal was not successful. Therefore he desired to teach Ramchandra a good lesson. Phabhat-chandra also stated that it was Ramkamal who hatched a dirty conspiracy to dismiss Ramchandra from the college. It was he who helped to spread calumny against Ramchandra pointing out that Ramchandra's opinion in connection with the case of Biswambhar Pundit's zamindary was wrong.¹⁷

The original private letters of Ramkamal do not substantiate this accusation. In a letter to Dr. Wilson in February, 1840, Ramkamal stated that he was glad to hear that the *pundits*' case had been attended to and Dr. Wilson had drawn the favourable attention of the Court of Directors to their grievance. But Ramkamal was afraid that the subject would die away in correspondence between the local and home authorities. There was "nobody to interest himself about the Government here". Colvin was spoken to be a Government Secretary. Soon he would no doubt adhere to Macnaghten doctrine and unless Dr. Wilson could "procure an order from the Court to restore the men at once" it would never be done.¹⁸

In another letter he wrote that the Government would not restore the discarded *pundits*. But they had been cleared from the charge imputed to them. The college men might be appointed in other branches of study where there were vacancies. The *pundits* requested Ramkamal to convey their sincere and grateful thanks to Dr. Wilson for the interest he had taken and for his trouble in defending their cause. They were sensible that had Dr. Wilson not used his interest and influence to save the *pundits* and had he not fought to procure justice they would never be heard, their case would not be attended to. As to Sir Macnaghten, he always opposed Dr. Wilson's opinion and would not agree with him, but the general opinion on Macnaghten's judgment against the *Pundits* was but one, that it was very severe and the persons he condemned did not deserve it. Supposing they were wrong, and gave unlawful *byabastha* they declared that the *byabastha* was to the best of their judgment and belief showing authority in books, it was for the *Hakeems* to reject it. But to punish for erring in judgment was "crude and absurd" and if the doctrine was interdecreed in the Suddar and Mofussil courts, how many pleaders and judges should suffer for decision in courts which decreed and dismissed alternately.¹⁹ This letter would certainly show

that Ramkamal was never against the *pundits* who were involved in this case : rather he was trying his best to secure justice for them with the active help and assistance of his friend, Dr. H. H. Wilson.

The services of a *vaidantic pundit* became necessary for a job to be done for Dr. H. H. Wilson. Ramkamal consulted Ramchandra *Pundit* in May, 1842.²⁰ In July he sent a few sheets of Koumudi with his letter commenting that last 4 pages could not be examined by Ramchandra.²¹ It showed that Ramkamal had great respect for Ramchandra as a *Vaidantic pundit* and Ramchandra was doing the job given to him. The relation between Ramkamal and Ramchandra was very cordial. If Ramkamal was instrumental for the dismissal of Ramchandra from the college such relation between them could not have existed.

When the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy was at its height the fate of the Sanskrit education in Calcutta was under a heavy stress. Ramkamal felt much relief by the letter of Dr. Wilson from Oxford dated the 5th December, 1835. Dr. Wilson wrote a brilliant letter defending the policies pursued by the General Committee of Public Instruction before the introduction of the new policies in 1835 and exposing the absurdities of the new policies.²² Ramkamal in June, 1836 wrote that he had received Dr. Wilson's valuable letter published in the *Asiatic Journal*. The number of copies received in the country had not been sufficient. He and his friends had re-printed a number of copies for distribution amongst the friends of oriental literature. Ramkamal got it "translated into Persian for the moosalmans". He remarked that the letter had produced some sensation in India.²³

Ramkamal stated, in February, 1840 that he had some discussions with Sir E. Ryan. The colleges were falling off and the Education Committee was going to recommend scholarship to students in lieu of monthly stipend to be granted on the basis of merit. The Government had found out that without inducement the people would not cultivate the literature with success.²⁴

In April, 1840, he wrote that the Oriental Colleges were not to be restored to monthly stipends, but the best students were to have scholarships for a specific term and purpose. Capt. Marshall* had gone to Darjeeling. There was no Secretary to the Sanskrit College. Nemaichand Seromoni** was dead.²⁵ In August he mentioned that the seat of Nemaichand Seromoni had not yet been filled.²⁶ He mentioned in September that the college was sinking.²⁷

The college had no system of charging any fee from the students. Stipends were granted to the poor scholars. A student was required to stay in the college for a period of 12 years to complete his studies.²⁸

Prior to 1835, stipends were bestowed liberally on the students of the Oriental Colleges. Lord Bentinck in 1835 abolished the stipendiary system. Stipends were not stopped all at once but they were absorbed gradually as vacancies took place.²⁹ The effect of the abolition of stipends was to shorten the period of studentship in most of the oriental institutions. The local committees of Benares and Delhi resented the decision of the Government.³⁰

The General Committee of Public Instruction in their Report for the year 1838-39, noted that a plan for the establishment of pecuniary scholarships at all the institutions was under the consideration of the Committee.³¹ Lord Auckland bestowed scholarships in place of stipends on the basis of merit.³²

The opinion of Dr. Wilson on the question of withdrawal of stipends of the students of Oriental Colleges was that the withdrawal would mean the virtual abolition of the colleges. To a considerable portion of the students of India, "stipends were the chief, very often their sole means of living."³³

In the annual report of the Sanskrit College for the year 1836 it was regretted that the unpaid scholars were less attentive than the paid ones. Number of students of the college was 122, of whom 57 were "pay scholars" receiving "monthly pay" of 5 or 8 Rupees and 65 "out students" getting no stipends from the Government.³⁴ It was reported in 1837 that the institution "remained stationary". Number of pay scholars at the end of the year was 54.³⁵ In 1838-39 the number of stipendiary students was 49.³⁶

About the scholarships in place of stipends, Ramkamal commented that these would not "answer the expectation of the Brahmins". Ramkamal was apprehensive that the career opened before the students of the Sanskrit College was becoming narrow day by day. The Sanskrit College might linger for sometime but ultimately its future was dark. *Zillah punditships* nearly gone, the vacancy when there was any, was not filled up.* The income of priesthood was daily diminished and the lands originally given to encourage Sanskrit literature was no longer available. The Education Committee could not get any person who knew Sanskrit and English to take up the Secretaryship of the Sanskrit College. Marshall whose knowledge in Sanskrit was very limited was going to Benares to examine the college there. Ramkamal thought that

Dr. Wilson would have to send out Sanskrit scholars for such offices who would conduct Sanskrit correspondence for the Government in Bengal³⁷ Ramkamal sent a copy of Lord Auckland's minute on education to Dr. Wilson and opined that Lord Auckland had changed his opinion. He passionately appealed to Dr. Wilson that the Hindus and *pundits* would feel obliged to him if he could inculcate a principle in the young civilians: the necessity of knowing something of literature, customs and law of a country and people they would come to govern, to protect or to do justice to the trust committed to them.³⁸

In the colleges, the Education Committee was going to grant periodical scholarship in the name of stipends, but Ramkamal did not think it would assist much towards reviving the dying literature. This was his opinion in October, 1841.³⁹

In his last letter he mentioned that the *pundits* of the college were going off fast. Nemai Seromoni and Kamalakanta* were dead, Joygopal** and Haranath*** were invalid, not likely to last longer.⁴⁰

It would appear that the condition of the Sanskrit College was not at all satisfactory in the period following Bentinck's resolution of March, 1835. The institution was obviously passing through a stage of crisis. Withdrawal of stipends harmed the Oriental Colleges. Legal studies could not attract the students. English was abolished from the college by an order of the Government in November, 1835 to be introduced again in October, 1842. A Bengali Department was opened in March, 1839 which, however, did not last beyond April, 1842.

The dismissal of Ramchandra and other *pundits* on a flimsy ground created an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Professors and teachers were scared. It was in a state of anxiety that the institution had to maintain its bare existence. The education policy of Lord Auckland gave some encouragement to these decaying institutions.

Ramkamal saw in the prevailing state of things a gradual fall of oriental studies. He was afraid that it would ultimately affect the development of the vernacular in which he was deeply interested.

Efficient oriental scholars were not being produced in the country. The death of some of the *pundits* made him melancholy. The entire situation was indeed lamentable. Painfully he wrote that Dr. Wilson might have to send out scholars from Oxford to fill important situations in the Oriental Colleges in India, the original home of Sanskrit.

It was in his lot to steer the institution in its most difficult hours.. He, however, did not fail to play his role even in a hostile environment.. In his reports to the General Committee of Public Instruction he faithfully narrated the developments of the period which affected the basic objects of the institution without any reservation whatsoever. His intimate knowledge of the institution, his affection for every man and thing connected with this college made it very much a part of his being. Therefore, the decay of Sanskrit and with it the decay of oriental studies became painful to him. As a matter of last resort, he requested Dr. Wilson to introduce Sanskrit again in the Fort William College so that the vernaculars would follow. He was anxious to see Dr. Wilson's Sanskrit Grammar, the Vishnu Purana and Mill's History being completed. He also expected a general index to all the Puranas and the Mahabharata with an account of the gods, demi-gods, heroes etc. He was desirous to know very much when and how the men were made to be gods. He remarked that the accounts now and then published of inscriptions and coins etc. required digesting and converting into a History of India. He regretted that hardly anything was going on in Sanskrit.⁴¹ His love of Sanskrit flowed from his love of Bengali. His sole aim was to develop Bengali language and literature.

Reference Notes

- * "Colleges be established at Nuddea and at Bhour near Bhowara in the district of Trihoot". Lord Minto's Minute on Sanskrit College in Trihut and Nuddea, Fort William, 6th March, 1811. The Revd. J. Long, *Selections from Unpublished Records of Government*, ed. Mahadevaprasad Saha, Appendix D, Calcutta, 1973, p. 734.
1. Letter of Dr. H. H. Wilson from Oxford, 5th December, 1835, *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australia*, Vol. XIX, New Series, January-April, 1836, p. 6.
 2. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Sanskrita Kaleger Itihas*, Part I, 1824-1858, Calcutta, 1948, p. 3.
 3. H. Sharp, *Selections from Educational Records*, Part I, 1781-1839, Calcutta, 1920, p. 79.
 4. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Sanskrita Kaleger Itihas*, Part I, 1824-1858, Calcutta, 1948, pp. 4-5.
 5. Ibid., p. 44.
 6. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
 7. Report of J. Grant to Major Troyer, Secretary, Sanskrit College, Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction for the year 1832, Home Misc. 471.
 8. Ibid., for the year 1833, Home Misc. 472.
- * Tytler was the Superintendent of the Native Medical Institution and an able oriental scholar. He once conducted a famous theological controversy with Raja Rammohan Ray.
9. Troyer, Secretary to the Sanskrit College to General Committee of Public Instruction, Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction for the year 1833, Home Misc. 472.
 10. John Tytler's letter to Troyer, Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction for the year 1833, Home Misc. 472.
 11. Resolutions of the Governor General in Council, No. 28 of 1835, 28th January 1835 quoted in *the Friend of India*, 12th February, 1835, p. 53.
 12. Letter from J. C. C. Sutherland, Secretary, General Committee of Public Instruction, 23rd November, 1835, quoted in Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Sanskrita Kaleger Itihas*, Part I, 1824-1858, Calcutta, 1948, p. 38.
- * English Department was opened on the 1st May, 1827. English was not a compulsory subject. But when the number of students increased two other teachers were appointed in this Department. The Department was, however, re-established in 1842. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Sanskrita Kaleger Itihas*, Part I, 1824-1858, Calcutta, 1948, pp. 37-38.
13. Ramkamal's letter to the General Committee of Public Instruction, 31st August, 1838, quoted in Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Sanskrita Kaleger Itihas*, Part I, 1824-1858, Calcutta, 1948, p. 39.
- * About the year 1830, the students of the Sanskrit College were required to translate from Bengali into Sanskrit and back again. Sometimes students were asked to write essays in Bengali prose. It was during 1838 that a definite step was taken to open a Bengali class. J. Kerr, *A Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency*, from 1835 to 1851. Part II, Calcutta, 1853, p. 56.
14. The Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction for the year 1838-39, p. 37

15. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed.. *Sahitya Sadhak Charitmala*, No. 9, *Ramchandra Vidyavagesha, Hariharananda Tirthaswami*, Calcutta, 1380 B.S., p. 9.
* Ishwardutta Pande of Benares Sanskrit College.
16. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
17. Prabhat Chandra Gangopadhyay, *Atmiya Sabhar Katha*, Calcutta, 1381 B.S., p. 79.
18. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 14 February, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
19. Ibid., Calcutta, 18 September, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
20. Ibid., Calcutta, 12 May, 1842. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
21. Ibid., Calcutta, 4 July, 1842. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
22. Letter of Dr. H. H. Wilson from Oxford, 5th December, 1835, *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australia*, Vol. XIX, New Series, January-April, 1836. pp. 1-16.
23. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta. 29 June, 1836. MSS Eur. E. 301/2.
24. Ibid., Calcutta. 14 February, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
* Capt. Marshall was the Secretary to Sanskrit College from March, 1839 to April, 1840.
25. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 18 April, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
** Nemaichandra Seromani was the Professor of Naya. Died on the 12th February, 1840. He was an inhabitant of Kanchanapolli or Kanchrapara, a village near Garifa.
26. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 6 August, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
27. Ibid., Calcutta, 18 September, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
28. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Sanskrita Kaleger Itihas*, Part I, 1824-1858, Calcutta, 1948. p. 7.
29. J. Kerr. *A Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency*, from 1835-1851, Part I, Calcutta, 1852, p. 104.
30. Ibid., p. 107.
31. The Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction for the year 1838-39, p. 9.
32. J. Kerr, *A Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency*, from 1835-1851, Part I, Calcutta, 1852, p. 108.
33. Letter of Dr. H. H. Wilson from Oxford, 5th December, 1835. *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australia*, Vol. XIX, New Series, January-April, 1836, p. 3.
34. The Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction for the year, 1836. p. 96.
35. Ibid., for the year 1837, p. 18.
36. Ibid., for the year 1838-39, p. 37.
* In 1837, it was reported to the General Committee of Public Instruction that the neglect of legal studies was in part due to the unsupplied vacancies of Zillah Panditships.
The Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction for the year 1837, p. 19.
37. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 15 February, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
38. Ibid., Calcutta, 8 May, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
39. Ibid., Calcutta, 15 October, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.

- * Kamalakanta Vidyalkar : Professor of Alankara (Rhetoric) since the very beginning of the college. He left the college in 1827 to be the law pundit of the Zillah Court of Midnapore. He joined the Sanskrit College again in 1842 and served the college upto August 1843. He expired on the 8th October, 1843. He was a highly respected pundit—a friend and a co-labourer of James Prinsep.
 - ** Joygopal Tarkalankar : He was an inhabitant of Bazrapur, Nadia. He served under Dr. Carey of Serampore for about 18 years. He served the college for 22 years as the Professor of Kavya. He expired on the 13th April, 1846.
 - *** Haranath Tarkabhusan : He was attached to the Sanskrit College since its inception as the pundit of Byakaran. He left for Benares in 1843 on account of his ill health. In 1844, he submitted his resignation.
40. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 18 January, 1844. MSS Eur. E. 301/5.
41. Ibid., Calcutta, 15 October, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.

Section—III

The Medical College

Lord Bentinck appointed a committee in 1833 to report on the state of medical education in India and suggest ways and means for its improvement.¹ Among the committee members there was only one Indian and he was Ramkamal.² The report was submitted on the 20th October, 1834.³ On the basis of this report, the Governor General in Council passed the resolutions abolishing the Sanskrit College Medical Class, the Medical Class of the Madrassa and the Native Medical Institution on the 28th January, 1835. It was stated in the said resolutions that a new college would be formed for the instruction in the various branches of medical science through the medium of English. The control of the new Medical College was left to the Education Committee.⁴ *The Friend of India* commented that the superintendence of the medical education should better be placed in charge of the Medical Board instead of the Education Committee⁵. The controversy that took place on the question of language through which the instruction should be imparted, was quite interesting. The letters of Woolaston⁶ and Tytler,⁷ Superintendent of the Native Medical Institution, on this issue would show that the arguments of orientalists were quite strong and both of them ably advocated for the retention of oriental language as the medium of instruction. In an extract from the report of the committee appointed by the Government of India to inquire into the State of Medical Education, it would be seen that the committee devoted much labour to refute the arguments put forward by Tytler.⁸ The resolutions of the Governor General in Council laid down in elaborate details the principles to be adopted in conducting the business of the institution. Assistant Surgeon M. J. Bramley was appointed to the situation of Superintendent of the new Medical College on the 1st February, 1835.⁹ Dr. Bramley was given the charge of organising the college. For the purpose of selecting the students on the foundation a preliminary examination was held on the 1st May at the residence of J. C. C. Sutherland, the Secretary to the General Committee of Public Instruction.¹⁰ The lectures commenced on the 1st June, 1835,¹¹ which should be considered as the actual date of

opening of the college. With 49 students, the college began its journey. Pundit Madhusudan Gupta was appointed demonstrator of Anatomy and Surgery on the 17th March, 1835.¹² In 1839, it was reported that in capacity of acquirements the Hindus were in no way inferior to Europeans.

For educating the Native Doctors for employment in the army and at civil stations an additional class was formed in 1839. Since the abolition of Dr. Tytler's Native Medical Institution, the supply of these Doctors had ceased but the demand of the services of these Doctors became urgent. The Medical College was therefore used as the means of educating these students. In the month of October, 1839 fifty students were selected. These young men were sons of native commissioned and non-commissioned officers. They resided on the premises of the college. The students of this secondary school were taught the rudiments of Anatomy, Pharmacy, Medicine and Surgery¹³ through the medium of Hindustanee. In 1840 Ramkamal Sen informed Dr. Wilson that the Native Doctors were to be trained again.¹⁴ In the Medical College, translation 'in Oordoo' was again being used.¹⁵

Four students passed the final examination in 1839 from the Medical College. In February, 1840 Ramkamal stated that he did not "undervalue the Medical College on principle." The institution would no doubt produce some clever young men. But he did not see in what way the country was to be benefitted by them. Ramkamal mentioned that he was discouraged by the example set by the students of the Hindu College. He had much less expectation from the medical students that they would teach European medicine to their fellow brothers. Those who had began to act as practitioners* were "tenacious, reserved and selfish". Ramkamal wondered what good was to be expected of them.¹⁶

Dr. Wallich went home on sick-leave in 1843.¹⁷ Ramkamal Sen, Dewan of the Bank of Bengal, placed at the disposal of the Council of Education, a gold medal to be awarded at the end of three successive sessions to the most advanced and best student of Botany. The medal was denominated the "Wallich Medal". Prasanna Kumar Mitra was awarded the medal in 1842-43.¹⁸

In 1842-43, the Deputy Governor acknowledged the contribution of Ramkamal Sen and four other Indians towards the advancement of the Medical College. He mentioned that in promoting the objects of the institution these Indians were conferring the most substantial

benefits on the inhabitants of India at large and were "securing for themselves the imperishable title of benefactors to their country."¹⁹

In the vacant place of Dr. Wallich, William Griffith, Acting Superintendent of the Botanical Gardens was appointed to officiate. Professor Griffith had the pleasure to mention that he took the liberty of addressing Dewan Ramkamal on the great advantages that would accrue from substituting microscopes, for the medals he had presented for a period of three years. The professor noted in his report that Ramkamal Sen was only prevented from accepting his advice by the fact of the medals having all been manufactured.²⁰

Ramkamal Sen addressed a communication to the Council of Education in 1843-44, offering a sum of Rupees 1000 to be bestowed as a prize or prizes for the best translations from standard English works into Bengali, upon the subjects of Anatomy, Materia Medica, and a popular account of the chief diseases to which the people of this country were susceptible together with directions for treating them.²¹ Ramkamal expired in August, 1844 and he had been mentioned as "an eminent friend and patron of education" in the education report for 1844-45.²²

Apparently Ramkamal did not play any remarkable role in the Medical College, Calcutta. But even then before we conclude this Section we deem it necessary to discuss a few points which appear to us significant.

First, it attracts our notice why Ramkamal Sen was appointed a member of the committee on the recommendation of which the Government established the Medical College. Though we have no way of knowing exactly the grounds on the basis of which the Government decided to appoint him a member of such an important committee yet we may reasonably assume that his connection with the Native Hospital, his contribution to the small Hospital attached to the Sanskrit College, his publication in Bengali on western medicine, his interest in municipal affairs and above all his eminent position in the academic field were possibly some of the grounds which might have guided the Government to select him to be a member of the said committee in preference to other eminent Indians in Calcutta of that period like Radhakanta Deb, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore or Rasamoy Dutta. None of Ramkamal's contemporaries contributed so much as he did for the establishment of modern hospitals in the town of Calcutta for the welfare of the common people.

Secondly, Ramkamal's sympathy for oriental languages was well known. His love of vernacular languages too was no secret.* He was also not a man who would compromise with the majority on the question of principle. He would not hesitate to give vent to his ideas even when they were not likely to be received with approbation. On the question of the language of instruction in the Medical College, Ramkamal did not differ in opinion with other members, who were all Europeans. He gave no dissenting note nor did he prefer to withdraw himself from the committee. This is important and interesting. The committee was unanimous in recommending that the medical students should possess a knowledge of English and the committee, "wish them to be able to drink at the fountainhead, instead of depending to ally their mental thirst with driblets of translation...."²³

It was clear to Ramkamal that the advancement of science and technology in the West was the prime reason of the material prosperity of that part of the world and the sole cause of superiority of the Western nations over their Eastern counterparts. For the up-to-date scientific information books in English would be of paramount importance and therefore for higher studies in medicine he unhesitatingly recommended English to be the language of study and teaching. On this point he had similarity of opinion with Dr. William Carey who also preferred English as the medium through which higher studies in medicine should be conducted²⁴ though Serampore men were known as "vernacularists".²⁵

Thirdly, Ramkamal gave a gold medal to the best student of Botany. The medal was known as "Wallich Medal". Usually Indians give such prizes in the names of their near relations. Ramkamal decided to honour a very eminent Botanist and a reputed professor of the College. Dr. Wallich had been a native of Denmark but he left his country young and "devoted his life to Natural History and Botany in the East".²⁶ It shows Ramkamal's respect for the Scientists, his regard for modern Science and his respectful recognition of the services of a celebrated professor too.

Lastly, though Ramkamal had recommended that the possession of a knowledge of English was sine qua non for the students of the Medical College yet he was convinced that the products of the college would not be easily accessible to the masses who were poor, helpless and ignorant. Rev. Long wrote that Ramkamal Sen was "anxious to spread medical knowledge in vernacular".²⁷ He appeared to be happy when a Secondary School was established to teach Western Medicine

to the boys through the medium of Hindustanee. He possibly wanted to see such a class established for students where study and teaching would be conducted through the medium of their own mother tongue, Bengali.* The expectation of the students of the Secondary School could not be very high and ultimately they would have to settle in rural areas of the country. Thus this class of Doctors would be of immense help to the helpless masses. He felt sincerely that the spread of Western medical knowledge even in a limited way would be of much help to the bulk of the people. As a preparatory measure he wanted to have good Bengali books on Western Medical Science. Scholars might not be willing to undertake the job unless there was any material incentive. Hence, he proposed to offer a sum of Rs. 1,000/- to the best translator of a standard English book on Western Medical Science in the Bengali language as a prize.

In his realm of ideas the masses and their welfare occupied a dominant place, though "on principle" he did not undervalue the benefits likely to accrue from the superior academic establishment like the Medical College, Calcutta which was elitist in character.

Reference Notes

1. J. C. Bagal, *Early Years of the Calcutta Medical College, (Based on Educational Records)*, *The Modern Review*, September, 1947, Vol. LXXXII. No. III, p. 210.
 2. C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India*, London, 1838, p. 220.
 3. J. C. Bagal, *Early Years of the Calcutta Medical College, (Based on Educational Records)*, *The Modern Review*, September, 1947, Vol. LXXXII. No. III, p. 210.
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 5. *The Friend of India*, 12th February, 1835. p. 52.
 6. Mr. Woolaston's letter to Major Troyer, 3rd April, 1834 quoted in the *Centenary of the Medical College, Bengal, 1835-1934*, 1935. Calcutta, Appendix IV, p. 128.
 7. John Tytler's letter to Major Troyer, 3rd April, 1834, The Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction for 1833, Home Misc. 472.
 8. C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India*, London, 1838, Appendix, pp. 207-220.
 9. Resolutions of the Governor General in Council. No. 28 of 1835, *The Friend of India*, 12th February, 1835, p. 53.
 10. The Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction for 1836, p. 63.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
 12. J. C. Bagal, *Early Years of the Calcutta Medical College, (Based on Educational Records)*, *The Modern Review*, September 1947, p. 210.
 13. The Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal for the year 1839-40, pp. 33-34.
 14. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 14 February, 1840. MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
 15. *Ibid.*, Calcutta, 15 October, 1841. MSS Eur. E. 301/4.
- * "The passed students of the English Department. are not bound to enter the public service. They are permitted to practice on their own account if they desire it. There is already a large number of graduates of the college practising in Calcutta . . ."
- J. Kerr, *A Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency, from 1835 to 1851*, Part II, Calcutta. 1853, p. 236.
16. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson. Calcutta, 14 February. 1840 MSS Eur. E. 301/3.
 17. J. C. Bagal, *Early Years of the Calcutta Medical College, (Based on Educational Records)*, *The Modern Review*, September. 1947. p. 215.
 18. The General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal Presidency for 1842-43, pp. 80-81.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
 20. The General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1843-44, p. 57.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
 22. *Ibid.*, 1844-45, p. 19.

23. C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India*, London, 1838, Appendix, Extract from the Report of the Committee Appointed by the Indian Government to Inquire into the State of Medical Education, p. 217.
 24. K. Ingham, *Reformers in India 1793-1833*, Cambridge, 1956, p. 115.
 25. George Smith, *The life of Alexander Duff*, Vol. I. London, 1879. pp. 187-188.
 26. R. Heber. *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-25*, Vol I, 3rd ed., London, MDCCCXXVIII, p. 54.
 27. J. Long, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works*, Calcutta, 1855 reprinted in D. C. Sen, *Bangabhasa O Sahitya*, Calcutta. 1356 B.S., Appendix, p. 426.
- * A Bengali class, for Indian doctors was sanctioned on the 25th January, 1852 and opened in that year. D. C. Crawford, *The Centenary of the Calcutta Medical College, Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. XLVIII, July-December, 1934, p. 76.

Section—IV

The Parental Academic Institution

On the 25th February, 1823, John W. Ricketts circulated a notice requesting parents, guardians and friends of a 'projected school' to attend a meeting to be held at his residence, No. 25, South Colingah Street, Calcutta on the 1st of March at 7 O'clock in the evening to settle "the first preliminaries of a work, the beneficial effects of which will flow down to our children's children."¹

At the meeting on the 1st March, 1823 a Society was formed to obtain for the youths the benefit of a good education by projecting an institution which would be managed by a committee chosen from among the general body of parents, guardians and friends. The institution was designated "the Parental Academic Institution" as indicative of its peculiar origin. Members of the committee of management were chosen. J. W. Ricketts was appointed Secretary to the institution. It was intended that the institution would be open for the admission of every child whose parents, guardians or friends might be willing to conform to the rules and regulations of the Society.²

This Indo-British Academy established on the 1st March, 1823 started functioning on the 1st May at 11, Park Street, Chowringhee, Calcutta.

Languages like Hebrew, Latin, Greek, French and English as well as the oriental languages were taught in the institution in addition to other subjects.³ The committee of management was in the first instance chosen by the general body of parents, guardians and "subsequently also of subscribers to the fund."⁴

A few years after the establishment of the Parental Academic Institution, it was faced with a serious financial crisis. In June, 1841 for the liquidation of debts, a circular was issued setting forth the objects which the institution had in view. The difficulties which prevented the committee from carrying out the objects of the institution were fully stated and on all these grounds, an appeal was founded for pecuniary assistance.

In response to this circular a subscription amounting to Rs. 1,700/- had been raised.⁵ Non-Christians paid only Rs. 134/- as donation to the institution.* Donations or subscriptions from non-Christians were nominal in the past years also.* Parental Academic Institution was primarily meant for East Indian community. Non-Christians were not to be found on the committee of management. In 1843, it was for the first time, that Ramkamal Sen a known orthodox Hindu was invited to be a member of the committee of management. In that year he was also to be found on the sub-committee of accounts and the educational sub-committee.

In the accounts of 1842 it was noted that the liabilities of the institution on the 31st December amounted to Rupees 8,289-11-5 being Rs. 7240-4-7 less than the amount of liabilities on the 31st December, 1841, which was Rs. 15,420-0-0.

The committee expressed their warmest acknowledgements to the donors and subscribers to the fund of the institution, with whose assistance much of its pecuniary difficulties had been overcome. It was also noted that from the non-Christian community, the institution had derived a very large measure of support and "the committee would be wanting in their duty, if they did not specially notice this fact with thankfulness on their part." The total donation received in the year was Rs. 3,493/-. Non-Christians, paid Rs. 1516-0-0. Ramkamal Sen paid as annual subscription a sum of Rs. 50/-. Non-Christian donation suddenly rose in 1842. This had been made possible because of some concerted efforts from some important quarters. It was possible that Ramkamal Sen had a very important role to play in this respect and hence he had been invited to be a member of the committee in 1843. As a successful manager of educational establishments, he was well known. Without any discrimination whatsoever, Ramkamal was ever ready to help an educational institution in crisis with his aid and advice.

Ramkamal Sen was re-elected to the committee of management in the general meeting held on the 7th March, 1844. As in the previous year, he remained a member of the educational sub-committee and of the sub-committee of accounts.

In the department of accounts, it was reported that the liabilities on the 31st December, 1842 amounted to Rs. 8289-11-5. This account on the 31st December, 1843 was reduced to Rs. 5946-14-10. The committee had every hope of effecting a further reduction in the course of the year. Certain changes were also made in the rules so that

schooling bills could be collected expeditiously. The committee therefore, noted that another gratifying circumstance would be "found in the reduced amount of outstanding claims of the institution".⁸ In this year, the institution borrowed a sum of Rs. 1000/- from Matilal Seal,⁹ a close friend of Ramkamal Sen. The role played by Ramkamal in the Parental Academic Institution was the role of an efficient manager and a genuine patron. He exerted his influence over his countrymen to come forward to assist this institution which was in great financial crisis at that time. Matilal Seal donated a sum of Rs. 500/- the highest in the list. The influence of Ramkamal worked well. He did all these simply because he wanted moral and intellectual amelioration of the people of India irrespective of caste, creed or complexion.

Reference Notes

1. *The Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March, 1823, pp. 188-189.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
3. *Ibid.*, May, 1823, p. 346.
4. The Committee of the Madras Parental Academic Institution and Doveton College, *A Brief History of the Parental Academic Institution*, Madras, 1854, p. 2.
5. Nineteenth Annual Report Relative to the Parental Academic Institution. Calcutta, 1842. p. 12.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

* Donations/Subscriptions paid by non-Christians towards the fund of the Parental Academic Institution.

(Figures collected from the available Annual Reports of the Institution).

Annual Report.	Date of General Meeting	Non-Christian Donations/ Subscriptions
1. Third Annual Report	1.3.1826	Rs. 50/-
2. Fourth "	1.3.1827	Rs. 16/-
3. Fifth "	1.3.1828	Rs. 8/-
4. Seventh "	1.3.1830	Rs. 50/-
5. Eleventh "	1.3.1834	Rs. 125/-
6. Twelve "	2.3.1835	Rs. 50/-
7. Fifteenth "	1.3.1838	Rs. 50/-
8. Sixteenth "	2.3.1839	Rs. 50/-
9. Seventeenth "	2.3.1840	Rs. 10/-
10. Nineteenth "	1.3.1842	Rs. 134/-
11. Twentieth "	16.3.1843	Rs. 1566/-**
12. Twenty First Report	7.3.1844	Rs. 50/-

** Dwarkanath Tagore — Rs. 100/-	Harachandra Lahiri — Rs. 32/-
Brijnath Dhur — Rs. 50/-	Manickjee Rustomjee — Rs. 16/-
Fuzl Kurreem — Rs. 16/-	Matilal Seal — Rs. 500/-
Prasanna Kumar — Rs. 150/-	Radhamadhab Banerjee — Rs. 300/-
Tagore	
Ramanath Tagore — Rs. 16/-	Ram Gopal Ghosh Rs. 36/-
Rustomjee Cowasjee — Rs. 300/-	Ram Kamal Sen Rs. 50/-

Twentieth Annual Report Relative to the Parental Academic Institution Calcutta, 1843, pp. 22-23.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
8. Twenty first Annual Report Relative to the Parental Academic Institution. 1844 p. 11.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 25.



Ramkamal's Literary Pursuits

Section—I

Pioneering Author of School Books

The Calcutta School Book Society was established in July, 1817. It was a "Society, most of whose managers and official members stood more or less intimately connected with the Government".¹

The objects of the Society were the preparation, publication and cheap or gratuitous supply of works useful in schools and seminaries of learning. It had been made clear that it formed no part of the design of that society to furnish religious books—a restriction, however, very far from being meant to preclude the supply of moral tracts or books of a moral tendency, which without interfering with the religious sentiments of any person might be calculated to enlarge the understanding and improve the character.

The attention of the Society was directed, in the first instance, to the providing of suitable books of instruction for the use of Indian schools, in the several languages (English as well as Asiatic), within the Presidency of Bengal.²

The Committee of Managers had 24 members. Eight among them were Indians. Ramkamal Sen was one of them.³

It was thought proper for the ready despatch of business to form three Sub-Committees, each of which had its appropriate province of consideration. One was established for the English language; a second for the Arabic, Persian and Hindustanee and a third for Sanskrit and Bengali.⁴

In the Bengali Department a collection of fables, 31 in all, had been translated into Bengali from English and Arabic by Tarini Charan Mitra, Radhakanta Deb and Ramkamal Sen. This had been highly and universally approved and "found to constitute an excellent reading book". It is very difficult to say which portion of the book was written by whom. It appears from the records that the book was a

হিতোপদেশ.

লোকেরদের হিত পুৰোধের জন্যে,
শ্রীযুত বাবু রামকমল সেন ও শ্রীরামপুরান্তর্গত
পাঠশালা নিবন্ধকর্তারদের
কর্তৃক সংগৃহীত.

মোঃ শ্রীরামপুরের ছাপাখানাতে ছাপা হইবে

শন ১৮২০. ১২২৭.

FABLES ;
IN THE BENGALÉE LANGUAGE.
PREPARED
By BABOO RAM-KOMUL SEN,
AND THE
SERAMPORE NATIVE SCHOOL INSTITUTION.



SERAMPORE :
PRINTED FOR THE CALCUTTA SCHOOL-BOOK SOCIETY,
1820.

collective work of the above mentioned three individuals and it can be contended that Ramkamal had taken an important part in the writing of this book. An edition of 500 copies having been distributed, another to double the extent, was printed. This additional supply could not meet the demand and therefore the society was induced to order a new edition of 4000 copies.

Ramkamal Sen prepared also "a very extensive set of tables comprising nearly 2,500 genuine Bengali words". The tables were presented to the Society. The Society, however, did not publish them at that time.⁵ The Society drew a guide-line for Anglo-Asiatic Dictionaries which were considered essential for learning English by Indian students and they specifically referred to Ramkamal Sen's translation of Dr. Johnson's English Dictionary.⁶

In the Second Report of the Society, it had been mentioned that the third edition to the extent of 4000 copies of the fables translated into Bengali by Mitra, Deb and Sen had been received from the press. This collection was "commonly known by its Bengali title of *Neeti Cotha* (moral instruction) Part I".⁷ In the course of two years, *Neeti Cotha*, Part I had been printed thrice and the total number of copies printed was 5500*.

Neeti Cotha Part II was composed by May, Harle and Pearson. Both the parts of *Neeti Cotha* had been very popular and useful in those days and the Committee saw the necessity of issuing a third collection.

Ramkamal Sen, a member of the Committee, had accordingly translated a considerable additional number of fables from the English; and the Serampore Missionaries agreed to incorporate certain parts of their Bengali 'Aesop' in this publication of the Society. It was decided that 6000 copies were to be printed at Serampore Press of which 5000 copies would be for the School Book Society and 1000 copies for the Serampore Missionaries.⁸

It had been stated in the Third Report of the Society that the *Neeti Cotha*, Part III** which was the Joint production of Ramkamal Sen and of the Serampore Missionaries had been received from the press and the collection was in the course of "rapid distribution".⁹

Neeti Cotha, Part I was translated into Hindi and Urdu for the Hindustanee Department of the Society.¹⁰

In the Sixth Report, the Committee of Managers noted that the

demand for *Neeti Cotha*, Part I had been “very extensive”* and a fifth edition of 5000 copies had been issued from the press.¹¹

On the 30th April, 1836, the Eleventh Report of the Society was read. The Rev. Lacroix** drew the attention to the primary object which the friends of Indian education should ever keep in view—that of encouraging the study of vernacular languages. He had had frequent opportunities of remarking, that the students of the English Colleges were ill versed in or wholly ignorant of their own tongue and “consequently unfitted for the transfer of any of the knowledge they had acquired to their countrymen”. Ramkamal Sen seconded the resolution.¹²

Books “required in the vernacular languages” had for several years been “fewer than might have been expected”. The demand for them had appeared to decrease as that for English ones had increased.¹³ Such was the state of affairs in the academic world of the Presidency of Bengal in the years that followed the introduction of new education policy in 1835 under the leadership of T.B. Macaulay.

The controversy which arose between the anglicists and orientalist was well known. But in between these two major parties, there was a third party, whom one might characterise as the party of “vernacularists”.¹⁴ The vernacularists favoured the foundation of vernacular institutions to “manufacture good teachers, reliable translators and pure books”.¹⁵ Serampore Missionaries and some others belonged to this third party.¹⁶ It seems that in this respect Ramkamal had much in common with the Serampore Missionaries.

According to the Rev. James Long the name of Ramkamal Sen stood “foremost as one of the early co-operators with the School Book Society and as a warm friend of vernacular translation”.¹⁷

Reference Notes

1. The Third Report of the Calcutta School Book Society for 1819-20. Read on 11th October, 1820, p. V.
2. The First Report of the Calcutta School Book Society. Read on 4th July, 1818, p. V.
3. Ibid., p. i.
4. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
5. Ibid., p. 4.
6. Ibid., pp. 14-16.
7. The Second Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1818-1819. Read on 21st September, 1819, p. 3.
 - * First edition—500 copies.
 - Second edition—1000 copies.
 - Third edition—4000 copies.
8. The Second Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1818-1819. Read on 21st September, 1819, pp. 3-4.
 - ** The Title of the book was Hitopadesh. This collection had 49 stories.
9. The Third Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1819-20. Read on 11th October, 1820, pp. 4-5.
10. Ibid., p. 13.
 - * From the date of establishment of the Society upto 1855, the Calcutta School Book Society published fourteen editions of Neeti Cotha, Part I.

1st Edition	500 copies.	8th Edition	2000 copies
2nd „	1000 „	9th „	2000 „
3rd „	4000 „	10th „	3000 „
4th „	2000 „	11th „	6000 „
5th „	5000 „	12th „	6000 „
6th „	2000 „	13th „	8000 „
7th „	2000 „	14th „	10000 „
11. The Sixth Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1824-25. Read on 7th September, 1825, p. 5.
 - ** The Rev. Mr. Lacroix, of London Mission, was considered to be one of the most eloquent and effective vernacular preachers in India. He could always secure a large audience by the charm of his manner and voice, and by a felicitous use of idiomatic Bengali in enunciating his well-arranged ideas, often associated with beautiful imagery, which delighted his listeners and sometimes attracted them to himself by a peculiar fascination.
 - Rev. M. A., Sherring, *The History of Protestant Missions in India*, London, 1875, p. 119.
12. The Eleventh Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1834-35. Read on 30th April, 1836, p. V.
13. The Twelfth Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1836-39. Read on 13th June, 1840, p. 7.
14. George Smith, *The Life of Alexander Duff*, Vol. I, London, 1879, p. 187.
15. Ibid., p. 188.
16. Ibid., p. 187.
17. Rev. J. Long, *Early Bengal Literature and News Paper, The Calcutta Review*. Vol. XIII, No. XXV, January-June, 1850, p. 142.

Section—II

Oṣadsārsangraha—A Book on Western Medicine

On the 5th June, 1819, the *Samachar Darpan* announced that Ramkamal Sen had printed a book from the Hindustanee Press, Calcutta, on the subject of European medicine in the Bengali language. The title of the book was '*Oṣadsārsangraha*', the sub-title being 'the Selection of Commonly-used Medicine'. In this book Ramkamal Sen had described fifty-six varieties of European medicine, the mode of using them and also the diseases in which they would be most appropriate and useful.

The journal commented that none had yet made any attempt to translate European medical books into the Bengali language and with the publication of this book they hoped that gradually books on European medical science would be published in Bengali which would be of much benefit to the people of India.¹

In the preface to the book Ramkamal wrote that with the rise of the British Power in India, the practice of European physicians had been extensive and many respectable Indians had been using European medicine in lieu of Indian for the simple reason that no serious attempts were being made to pursue and develop the Indian medical science. But no book on European medicine had yet been translated into the language of this country and therefore, it was difficult for an Indian to equip himself theoretically in this branch of European science. Therefore, the author thought it proper to describe in his book, the commonly-used medicines, their names, methods of preparation and their usefulness in the Bengali language for his countrymen. The author further stated that if this publication proved useful, he desired to include more items which had not been incorporated in the book and publish another edition of this title in an enlarged volume. In the title page it was stated that in translating the book from English, the author had the privilege of securing the assistance of a very learned European medical man. The date of publication was 1226 B.S. corresponding to 1819 A.D.²

The book '*Oṣadsārsangraha*' was the first publication on a scientific subject in the language of the people of Bengal. Significantly enough the book was written by Ramkamal Sen, an Indian. He be-

ଓଷଧମାରମଂଗୁହ

ଅଥବା

ମଞ୍ଜରୀଚର ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ଓଷଧ ମିର୍ମୟ.



ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡରେ କୋମ

ବିଜୟବନ୍ଦ୍ୟର ମହକାନ୍ତିତା

ଅବଲମ୍ବନ କରିବା ଇଂରାଜୀ

ହରଡ଼େ ବାଞ୍ଛା ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ମୁଦ୍ରାନ୍ତିତ ହେଲ.



କଲିକାତା:

ହିନ୍ଦୁସାନୀପ୍ରେସ.

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longed to Baidya or Physician caste. It might not be unnatural to assume that he had imbibed interest in *Ayurvedic* or Indian medicine since his childhood. European medical science therefore, attracted his attention and his association with Dr. H. H. Wilson, who was a medical man himself, helped Ramkamal to learn the subject to some extent. Ramkamal certainly studied the subject as much as was possible for him. To educate the people of his country, he, in his limited capacity, desired to communicate the useful knowledge of Western medicine to them through his humble publication.

A very significant point has to be noted here. In the days when writing of text books mostly occupied the minds of the people interested in the spread of education among the Indians, Ramkamal Sen fulfilling his commitments in that sphere, could come out and set a new example of writing useful books for the common Bengali readers. It was a sharp departure from the general trend of the day. Publication of books conveying useful scientific information in lucid vernacular languages would slowly but invariably bring about a change in the outlook of the people tied firmly with the traditional society.

To translate a book on medical science into Bengali from a foreign language was itself a difficult task. It was more so especially in the days when Bengali prose was in its infancy. In the nineteenth century Bengal, eminent Bengali authors, before or after Ramkamal, mostly engaged themselves in translating or adapting creative literature of other languages into Bengali. Bengal had the tradition of creative writings in the domain of poetry though not in the field of prose since long. Therefore, the creative writers of the nineteenth century Bengal had at least some sort of creative tradition behind them. But the writers of scientific books in Bengali had no tradition as such. Since Ramkamal was the author of a book, the subject of which had never been dealt with in the Bengali language by any person before him, he had to follow a style peculiarly his own in writing useful prose to express his ideas. In that sense he was a path-finder and a pioneer.

It would be interesting to examine the following passage from the book in question to show how far Ramkamal was successful in translating it.

Ring Worm Ointment.

Dadru Nāsak malam.

Sohāga gandhak sādā malam kimbā mākhan tadābhābe ghṛita sahita

ekatra kariyā mardan karile dadru nāsak malam haya, e malam dādute dile upakāra kare ihāte rangabhasma misrita kariyā*byabahār karile adhik guṇa-kāraka haya, malam deoner reeti ei, dādu usma jale * kimbā sābān diyā dhouta kariyā pratidin e malam anguli dwārā duibār dibek, malam diyā tāhār upar purātan bastra dwārā ābrita kariyā rākhibek.³

In the above passage at least twenty-six Sanskrit words could be found in addition to a very few Persian and Arabic words such as 'malam', 'sābān' etc. Nouns and adjectives had been mostly derived from Sanskrit and a few from Arabic and Persian. But the most interesting point was that Ramkamal preferred such words of foreign origin which were frequently used in the Bengali language even in the early nineteenth century. The Bengali language had adopted them as its own and it had practically no other synonyms of such words. Words from different languages borrowed so successfully to express even the technical terms that the translation of a scientific book had been made as lucid as possible. Words used were apt and easily understandable by the people for whom the book was meant. One of the most significant aspects of his translation was that to communicate his ideas he preferred to choose words commonly used by the people remaining unconcerned about their origin. He suffered from no inhibitions. He picked up words from English, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit languages which would convey the exact idea and at the same time would be clearly intelligible to the readers without any difficulty. He retained foreign terms as were in use and unnecessarily did not, for the sake of purity of the language of Gaur, choose to make his translation pedantic. To a Bengali it did not appear to be a translation at all. In fact, it had all the qualities of an original composition. Ramkamal was fully successful in accomplishing his task. Dr. H. H. Wilson correctly estimated his scholarship in Bengali and praised him to be "an excellent Bengali scholar"⁴ of the period.

Felicity of diction of authors like Iswarchandra Vidyasagar or Bankimchandra Chatterjee rightly deserved admiration of scholars. But the prose style adopted by Ramkamal Sen for writing on a subject, absolutely prosaic and dry in character, was no less admirable if considered in the background of the development of Bengali prose in the early nineteenth century.

An attempt may be made to estimate the achievement of Ramkamal Sen from a different perspective also.

· Vidya—Haravulee or *Bengalee Encyclopaedia*, Vol. I, Anatomy,

was published by Felix Carey, a contemporary of Ramkamal in November, 1820. On the subject of Western medical science, it was the second publication in Bengali, though on Anatomy, it was the first of its kind.

His translation seems to be highly Sanskritised and the language stiff. He depended much on his knowledge of Sanskrit which had been reflected in the terms, phrases, conjugation of words and even in the style followed by him in translating the book. Words not used in Bengali had even been used (for example “twayc” or “abyathaniya”). Every word of the original had been translated and the author paid very little attention to make his translation popular and lucid.

Sir William Jones was the man who first threw light upon the Sanskrit language and pronounced it to be “of wonderful structure : more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either.” Since that time an interest had spread rapidly among Europeans in that language. Sanskrit was considered elegant and precise as a medium of composition.⁵

In a close scrutiny it would appear that even the vernacularists who are so much praised for the development of Bengali prose also paid too much attention to Sanskrit. Young Felix was no exception to this rule. His *Vidya—Haravulee* though praised as a brilliant literary production of the period yet for the sake of truth it has to be pointed out that the book remains mostly unintelligible to the common Bengali readers who are not conversant with the Sanskrit language.

We may quote below a few passages from his book which will provide an opportunity to compare the Bengali prose compositions of young Carey with that of Ramkamal Sen. Both these contemporary translators translated books on Western medical science in the Bengali language.

A. Pratham Khander Prathamādhyā.

Asthi ebang oi asthi sakaler sahita je je bastur
somparka tannirnaya.

1. Asthi atidriḥ ebang atikathor ebang śwetbarṇa ebang abyathaniya. Śarirer samasta angser madhya asthi sarbāpekshyā niret ebang ghana ebang oi asthite tābat śarier anyāngsha sanglagna ebang tadupari sarbasarir nirbhar kare.

2. Oi asthidrabya sakal byabachedakerā tridha kahīya-chen beseṣata oi asthir bahirbhāg jāhā jathārthāsthi ebang oi asthir chidramayabhāg ebang se sakaler jālbāt madhyasthita twayc. Oi pratham kathita bahirbhāg bahupatradwārā nirmita haiyā atikathor drabyarupe ache. Oi chidramaya bhāg madhur cāker nyaya nirmita-prajukta chidramaya bhaga baliyā prasidha āche. Asthir madhye je oi chidramaya angsa tāhā nalakāsthir agravāger pradhānāgsa. Apar oi asthimadhye sthita jālabadangsa tāhā tantubiśiṣṭa ebang oi tantu jāler nyaya grathita. Oi Jālabadav nālikāsthi sakaler antar-bhāg han.

B. Ditiyārdhyer Pratham Parba
Karotyasthi ebang mukhāsthir nidarsan

1. Karotimadye Aṣṭa asthi āche biṣeṣata lalātāsthi ebang ubhaya pārṣviya kapāldvaya ebang pascāt kapāl ebang sankhāstidvaya ebang kuṇyasthi ebang jhnajrāsthi.
2. Oi kathita asthir madhye kebal ubhaypārswiya kapāldvaya ke ebang pascātkapālasthisakalke cikitsakerā karotir madhya gānanā kariyāchen. Mastaker anyānya asthike byabacchedakera karoti ebang mukhāsthi ei ubhaya padartha kahiyāchen.

In conclusion it has to be said that in spite of limitation, Felix had been judged by far the best among the European translators of the period.⁶ Felix was a foreigner, and hence he suffered from some obvious limitations. Therefore, he could not succeed in his endeavour as much as Ramkamal could, for Ramkamal was a son of the soil and had some advantages over Felix Carey.

Reference Notes

1. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1377 B.S., p. 60.
2. Ramkamal Sen, *Ouṣadsārsangraha*, Calcutta, 1226 B.S., Preface.
3. Ibid., Item No. 29.
4. Dr. H. H. Wilson's letter dated the 2nd November, 1844 quoted in P. C. Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 44.

Note : *Ouṣadsārsangraha* by Ramkamal Sen is not available in the libraries situated in and around Calcutta. We have been able to procure a copy which is thoroughly damaged. We therefore, think it proper to quote a few more passages which we have been able to read with much difficulty. The passages will help us to estimate his prose style.

A. Turlington's Balsam
Taralington Bālsam

Ihā dibā mātṛe rakta bandha haya, o kshatar bedanā śamatā haya, ouṣadha diyā ekin tīgābāndhiyā rākhibek, jadi kshta baḍa haya, arthat kātā bistrīta o gabhir haya, āṛ bedanā thāke tabe usma jal diyā kshata dhouta kariā sukhā malamer patee dibek, jadi baḍa bedanā o phulā thāke tabe pultiṣer pralep dibek, o kshata dibase duibār usma jale dhouta kariyā patee dibek, sādā malam ityadi dwārā kshata suska karibek... (Item No. 38).

B. Powder of Charcoal.

Kāsta bhasma karile aṅgār haya, āṛ aṅgār bhasma kariyā subhra haile, sai bhasma jal diā adhik kāl jwāl diā niḥses karile patāskshār haya, jāhār guṇa bāra dhārāte likhā giyāche, aṅgārer guḍār guṇa durgandha nibārak, ouṣa-dhārthe aṅgār byabahār karile uttam kāsther aṅgār laibek... Lohā churṇa hirākaṣ pravṛiti kshār drabya saṃyogkrita manjan jāhāke meṣee kahe, idānantan aneka sacarācar byabahār kare, se manjaner guṇa śubhra danta athabā mukhke kalo kare āṛ sacchanda dantake piḍita kare, o danta mūl kshaya pāiyā niyamita kāler pūrbe nirdanta haya, ihāte upakār kincit aropita kshaṇik soundarya mātra, kintu apakār jathesta... (Item No. 33).

5. W. S. Seton-Karr, *Sanskrit language and literature ; Their Merits and Demerits*, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. III, January-June, 1845, p. 264.
6. *Sajanikanta Das, Bangla Gadyasahityer Itihas*, Calcutta, 1975, p. 211.

Section—III

A Dictionary in English and Bengalee

The servants of the East India Company were at first mere traders and their business with the people of Bengal was conducted for some time through signs and gestures. At last, according to tradition, a Bengali dhoba or washerman picked up a very little English to act as their interpreter. The commercial dealings were long carried on through the instrumentality of this class.¹ “This imperfect communication continued until the establishment of the Supreme Court in 1774”, when the advantage of acquiring English was first extensively felt by the Bengalis.²

Ramkamal Sen “evinced considerable taste for antiquarian research”.³ In the valuable preface to his Dictionary he stated that one of the first teachers of English was a Brahmin named Ramram Misra. Ramram’s chief disciple was Ramnarayan Misra, a clerk to an attorney of the Supreme Court. He, afterwards, kept a school in which he taught a number of Bengali youths and received from them a monthly fee varying from 4 to 16 Rupees each. Before this time, one Anandiram Das had a vocabulary of words which was considered a treasure of English knowledge and a number of young Bengalis used to attend daily upon him for hours to get some scraps from his book. “The pious philanthropist” used to give out five or six words every day for their study. Ramlochan Napit, Krishnomohan Bose and some others also used to teach English in the same manner. Ere Long Bhabani Dutt, Sibū Dutt and a few others became “celebrated English Scholars”.⁴ Other teachers of note were Franco called Panchico, a Portuguese, and an Armenian named Aratoon Pitrus. The limited proficiency attained by the Bengali students in English might be estimated from their access to Thomas Dyche’s spelling-book and Schoolmaster’s Assistant for many years. In 1801, Miller published a thin folio volume, containing the alphabet, a few elementary rules of grammar, and some stories; 4000 copies of this work were subscribed for at Rs. 32/- a copy, giving a total of about £ 15,000. This shows an extraordinary urge of the people of Calcutta to acquire English.⁵ About this time Ramkamal studied English. There was “no Dictionary or Grammar”. The need of an Anglo-Bengali Dictionary was imperative. Forster’s publication a vocabulary, was beyond the reach

of the average Bengali student as the price of the publication was too high.⁶ Forster printed his dictionary* in two volumes quarto, one Bengali and English, the other English and Bengali. It was the earliest publication of this nature. "Although possessed of great merit" especially as the first compilation, the dictionary was far from complete.⁷ Ramkamal Sen, from his school days deeply felt that to acquire the knowledge of a foreign language, various means were requisite, among which a dictionary was of the greatest importance. It was the first thing necessary and might be considered as the key to knowledge. When furnished with it, a student became in a great measure, independent of other aids.⁸

When the Hindu College and the Calcutta School Book Society came into existence for the education of the youths of Bengal, the want of an English—Bengali Dictionary was most deeply felt and the task of preparing one seemed imperative upon those who took an interest in the cause of education and the diffusion of knowledge among them. Ramkamal was one of the pioneers of those educative institutions and he took upon himself the task of translating Johnson's English Dictionary, octavo edition, containing about 40,000 words into Bengali.⁹

On the 2nd March, 1817 Dr. William Carey, Professor of Sanskrit and Bengali Languages of the College of Fort William, wrote that one of the principal exercises in the Bengali class in the College was to translate select pieces from English writings into the Bengali language, in which the want of an English and Bengali Dictionary was severely felt.¹⁰ For those amongst Europeans who devoted their time to the study of Bengali, it was particularly and indispensably necessary to possess a dictionary with the meaning of words rendered into English, because the languages bear no affinity to each other.¹¹

The language of Bengal was "spoken through a territory extending about 100,000 square miles, by a population of more than twenty millions".¹² Bengal being the seat of the British Government, the language of that province was exclusively used in the principal offices of the Government. The accounts in the first instance, were also kept in Bengali and the Principal Indian officers were the inhabitants of that province. Hence it was highly desirable that the Bengali language should be known to the Europeans and that the Indian officers of Government should be acquainted with English, in which almost all correspondence of Government was carried on and which was the regular and principal channel of communication between Englishmen

and Indians. It was, therefore, necessary that proper means should be placed within the reach of both parties, for until these languages were mutually understood by both, the administration of justice and the management of public affairs could not be duly and advantageously secured.¹³ Bengal was the chief emporium of Indian commerce. It was the resort of a great number of Europeans, either official functionaries, traders or planters, and, from these different circumstances, the intercourse that subsisted between the people of the country and the foreigners was of the most constant and intimate description, and involved interests of the highest magnitude. It was consequently of the greatest importance that the means of maintaining this intercourse effectually should be assiduously facilitated and improved.¹⁴

Upto the year 1817, the Anglo-Bengali Dictionaries which appeared in print had not been dictionaries in the strict sense of the word "but vocabularies, calculated chiefly for schools, and containing only those words (but without synonyms)" which were constantly in use in the course of business and in common conversation.¹⁵

The compilation of a dictionary on a large scale would be an object of great utility. But for an individual it would be extravagant to have undertaken so gigantic an enterprise without the patronage of the Government and of the public at large ; the labour would be enormously expensive and the compilation doubtful.¹⁶

The College of Fort William provided aid and encouragement towards the publication of scholarly works. But the college authorities usually patronized European authors, persons connected with their institutions. No English book had been translated by an Indian author so long. Even then, having prepared a translation of a considerable portion of the words of the latest edition of Dr. Johnson's English Dictionary comprehending the etymology with their meanings in the Bengali language Ramkamal offered the work to the consideration of the College Council and hoped that it would deserve their encouragement. He proposed to complete the work and render the compilation as extensive and correct as possible by insertion of compound verbs and citation of examples of such words as cannot be exactly explained in the Bengali language.

The extent of the work, in his opinion, would be at least 1,000 pages quarto, the number of copies to be printed as usual and the printing charges were estimated at an amount between Rs. 8000 and Rs. 9000. With a view to ensuring individual subscription for a number of copies, he proposed Rs. 50 should be the price for the Euro-

peans, and that for the Indians as low as possible, to be regulated, so as to place it within their reach. The certain disposal of 200 copies would be necessary before he could venture to complete and publish it with any reasonable prospects of security. Along with the specimen of the proposed work, Ramkamal submitted also the samples of Bengali types to be used in printing the work proposed. Ramkamal thought of tapping this source of patronage. But he did not approach the College Council without making a considerable progress. He requested the Council of the College to extend that patronage and liberality to his work which would have been bestowed upon almost every oriental publication of the period and he solicited the subscription of 100 copies of the work, at such price as might indemnify him from a loss. He assured the College Council that he would spare no pains to render the work useful to the public service and worthy of encouragement and aid solicited as far as his ability and means would permit with the assistance he would be able to obtain both from the orientalists and learned men of Bengal and from those gentlemen to whom he had the honour to be known. He expected to publish the first part of the Dictionary in 1819, provided the aid solicited was granted to him.¹⁷

The College Council did not take immediate action on the application of Ramkamal Sen. They requested Dr. William Carey to report his "sentiments on the utility of the work proposed" by Ramkamal and they wanted also to know how far it appeared to merit public encouragement.¹⁸

In reply to the request of the College Council Dr. Carey wrote : "I have examined the specimen of the work which accompanied your letter . . . I feel a great pleasure in the prospect of the publication of the present work and the more so, because the Dictionary published by the late Mr. Forster (and which is out of print) is so incorrect as to be of very little authority. Ram Kumala appears to be fully competent to the performance of the work he proposes. His knowledge of the English language is fully sufficient for it, and I have no doubt of his accomplishing it in a manner highly reputable to himself and useful to the public. I, therefore, have no hesitation in recommending the subscription for 100 copies which he solicits, as without that assistance he would run the risk of a considerable loss should he publish it, and should he decline the publication through fear of loss, those who are employed in the study of this important language will continue to feel a want which is not likely to be soon removed".¹⁹

The College Council wanted to know clearly from Ramkamal certain points respecting the number of copies to be printed and the rate of the printing charges estimated for the work. Ramkamal, in reply to the queries, wrote that he intended to print 500 copies and the rate of printing that number of copies on Patna Paper had been calculated at Rs. 70 per sheet or Rs. 8,750/-. The subscription he solicited was "Sa Rs. 6,250/- for 100 copies" to be reduced or increased to the actual extent of the work. He proposed a modest price of Rs. 50/- for the European purchasers. His idea behind the proposal was simple. By reducing the rate lower than usually charged for other oriental works, published in Calcutta, of a similar nature and size, he would be "able to obtain a greater number of subscribers than if it were fixed at Rs. 80/- or Rs. 90/-."

Ramkamal stated that the cost of printing any work was not the only expense attending it, and that the employment of copyists, the purchase of books etc. might also be taken into account. These collateral expenses had in many works been provided for by the liberality of the Government and the authors of several useful publications had been granted a monthly allowance* for the establishment they had to retain. Ramkamal did not request the College Council for such assistance, though he felt that the subscription of individuals would be limited. He could not venture to incur the risk of having nine or ten thousand Rupees to any should be subscription of Government not be equal to $\frac{2}{3}$ of that sum at least. He hoped that the subscription might be extended upon the number of copies so as to be equal to the same amount of Rs. 6,250/- or 125 copies.²⁰

The College Council had to consider "the very strong testimony given by Dr. Carey to the qualification of Ramkamal Sen for the proposed work" and the great need of such a Dictionary for the students of the Bengali language. "With the Professor's intimation that the compiler would run the risk of considerable loss if he were to publish his work without the assistance solicited by him", the College Council recommended subscription on the part of the Government for 100 copies at Rs. 50/- per copy.²¹

On the 29th March, 1817, A. Trotter, Actg. Secretary to the Government informed Harington, President and Members of the Council of the College of Fort William that adverting to the favourable "testimony borne by Dr. Carey to the qualifications of Ramkamal Sein, to enable him to complete in a satisfactory manner the

English and Bengali Dictionary in which he is engaged, and considering the great advantage which will be derived from a Dictionary of that description, His Lordship in Council is pleased, in compliance with your recommendation, to subscribe on the part of the Honourable Company for one hundred copies of the work, at the rate of Fifty Rupees per copy".²²

In the preface to his Dictionary Ramkamal remarked that he felt grateful to the Government for the encouragement given him as it was more than had been granted to an Indian for work of this nature. Yet it would not exempt him from loss in printing, nor would it repay him the expense he had incurred in employing writers, *pundits* etc.²³ In a letter to Dr. Wilson in 1835, Ramkamal wanted to know whether his Dictionary was likely to sell in England. He concluded his letter with the remark that it did "not sell here" in India.²⁴

The Calcutta School Book Society had drawn a guide line for Anglo-Asiatic Dictionaries. In the First Report of the Calcutta School Book Society in 1818, observations were made on this subject. The Committee attached "the utmost importance to the compilation, on the best principles and most appropriate plan" of Anglo-Asiatic Dictionaries, of Dictionaries in which the terms of the English language were rendered in any of the tongues of Asia.²⁵ The object being in every such instance to furnish the most compendious means of enabling the youths of these countries to read with pleasure and profit the popular prose works of merit in the English language, as well as to hold familiar discourse on it. The report stated that many terms explained in the great work of English Lexicographer might be omitted with positive advantage. It specifically referred to Johnson's Dictionary and mentioned that many words in the said Dictionary rarely occurred in ordinary reading, and even Englishmen in general had occasion to consult the Dictionary for their meaning, e.g. *abactor*, *abacus*, *abator*.

The Report suggested that in the first place it should be the endeavour of every learner to devote his whole efforts to the acquisition of that part of most common use in conversation and the writings of current and esteemed authors. This part might be considered the core of the language and it being once mastered, the remainder of his progress was easy. It might be remarked in the second place, that a Dictionary completely to answer its purposes, should contain well-chosen examples comprising the terms meant to be explained. The ad-

mission of examples, however, should not swell a Dictionary to an inconvenient size.²⁶ In the third place it was noted that the experience appeared to have fully demonstrated the advantages resulting from the combination of European and Asiatic talent and labour in most, if not all, undertakings which had a reference to oriental literature. For the compilation of any well-executed and standard Anglo-Asiatic Dictionary, it appeared absolutely indispensable.

The Committee, therefore, judged that it would be highly satisfactory to the members of the Society to be informed that considerable progress had already been made in arrangements which would go to obtain for the public the speedy and judicious execution of an Anglo-Bengali Dictionary on foregoing principles. The Committee was happy to note that Ramkamal Sen, who had printed a small part of the English and Bengali Dictionary he had long been engaged in, was so convinced of the advantages which might result from their adoption, that he was willing to recommence the work on the new plan proposed. Three gentlemen well qualified for the task, Revd. Messrs Eustace Carey, Yates and Townley, would cheerfully contribute their assistance.

Though the Committee had not come to any definite resolution with regard to the nature and extent of the aid to be afforded, it conceived this undertaking to have the strongest claims on the patronage of the Society and the public.²⁷

In the Second Report, it would be found that the Society had subscribed for five copies of Ramkamal Sen's English and Bengali Dictionary which was then proceeding on its original plan. As part of the work had already been printed on that plan, Ramkamal, on consideration, hesitated to sacrifice it by the adoption of that sketched in the observations in the First Report on the subject of Anglo-Asiatic Dictionaries.²⁸

The prospectus of a Dictionary, English and Bengali by Ramkamal Sen, Deputy Librarian, Asiatic Society, appeared at the end of the Report. Ramkamal stated in the prospectus that the Dictionary proposed to be published would contain the words found in the latest edition of Dr. Johnson's English Dictionary, with a translation of them into the Bengali language. For words relative to Arts and Sciences, of which no adequate interpretation could be given in the Translator's own language, he would adopt explanatory terms taken from the Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. He also proposed to give a complete table

of the systems or orthoepy for the Bengali language, adopted by William Jones, Gilchrist and Forster, together with a short history of the Bengali language. In order to render the work more useful, he had included most of the names of plants and herbs of this part of the world, together with the terms of the *Materia Medica* of Hindoostan used by Carey, Buchanan, Roxburgh and others.²⁹ Ramkamal narrated why the want of a Dictionary, English and Bengali had been long, felt both by the youths of Bengal and by the European students of the Bengali Language. He candidly declared that gain was "not the end in view, but the means of facilitating the cultivation of the English language" which he hoped to afford by this undertaking.

Ramkamal submitted the prospectus to the consideration of the public and hoped that they would extend that patronage and support which was bestowed upon almost every literary production in this country. The work would be printed in one volume, quarto, comprising about 1000 pages. Price to subscribers on Patna Paper would be Sicca Rs. 50/- and on Europe paper Sicca Rs. 64/-, to be delivered in two parts when issued from the Press.³⁰

When the manuscript was nearly complete, Ramkamal committed the work to the press in 1817 under the patronage of the College of Fort William, but various circumstances conspired to retard its publication. The progress made by the press was tardy and the transfer of the establishment to a different purpose, rendered the compilation of the Dictionary remote and uncertain. One hundred and sixteen pages printed with a fount of Bengali types prepared for the purpose under his own superintendence became useless, and he could get no work from the press which demanded fresh terms that Ramkamal could not consider just. He paid the value of the hundred and sixteen pages already printed and received the printed sheets which in fact became useless to him.³¹

An interesting development took place at this stage. Dr. H. H. Wilson was then in Benares. In September, 1820 Ramkamal wrote to Dr. Wilson that nothing had occurred in Calcutta worth reporting "except a very mortifying and unfortunate circumstance" which happened in connection with the publication of his Dictionary. The whole of the "Boytackana missionaries" in association with Montague and others had few competitors in the field of publication. Ramkamal had proposals from some of them to join Townley and Yates. But thinking that it would be inconvenient for him to publish the work with their joint assistance, which they would not or could not give him

in the way he might expect, and not being willing to alter the plan already adopted, he declined to accept their proposals. The missionaries, then began to print the Dictionary in octavo with small type and they intended to publish a large edition which they might sell at Rs. 16/- per copy. Montague had a copy of the work as far as Ramkamal had printed and in pretence of keeping it in his library, in fact he and his colleagues were printing the same matter with a few alterations.

As these missionaries were many they had divided the alphabet between themselves, each *padre* to prepare certain letter and having a number of *pundits* and presses of their own in their employ, they might complete the book in a short time. When they published the work it would naturally supersede Ramkamal's work very much. Ramkamal wrote that he "remonstrated against it but the pious gentlemen would not desist", saying that their work would be a different one.

Ramkamal felt great distress in this and did not know what to do. He could not give up his undertaking as that would be dishonourable. He felt helpless, for, there was nobody in Calcutta to assist him or give him advice on this awkward issue, "except Dr. Carey who tho' willing to do anything in his power" for him, would "not interfere with his brother missionaries".

Pearce also proposed that Ramkamal should join the missionaries and publish both the editions in joint account—first their edition and afterwards Ramkamal's. But it appeared to Ramkamal that their real object was to publish their own edition with Ramkamal's matter and to have the advantage of the college subscription and also to get the book printed at Pearce's press. Ramkamal, therefore, "would not accept this" proposal as he could "no longer place any confidence to any of them".³²

In the Third Report of the Calcutta School Book Society it was stated that Ramkamal Sen's translation of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary was proceeding slowly³³ Ramkamal was in a difficult situation as he could not find a suitable press to print his Dictionary at a reasonable cost quickly.

In the month of October, 1820 Ramkamal wrote to Dr. Wilson that on his going to the Ballygunge house to pay a visit to Capt. Price, he was favoured with Dr. Wilson's letter handed to him by Capt. Price. Ramkamal felt much obliged and was enlivened by Dr. Wilson's kind encouragement about his literary undertaking. He

received after he had written to him "on the subject of Dictionary, a proposal from Felix Carey". Serampore missionaries invited Ramkamal to join them in the publication of the Dictionary. They promised to assist him as much as possible, provided Ramkamal would print the work at their press and share the profits with them. Dr. Carey would correct the proofs and his son Felix and young Marshman would compare the manuscript before it was committed to press. The advantage arising from an arrangement like this was evident and it appeared to him to be rather a favourable one as the object of publishing this work was not money, which would be but very little even if it was done on very kind terms Dr. Wilson had the goodness to mention. If Dr. Carey superintended the press, it would save much of his time and trouble. Ramkamal, therefore, did not decline their offer and far from giving a "final *Jubab*", he told Dr. Carey that he would make a reference to Dr. Wilson and when he got an answer, he "would see what to be done". About Dr. Carey, Ramkamal remarked that Dr. Carey had been very kind and very much wished to see his work published. Having recommended it to the Government, Dr. Carey was willing to give "as much assistance as his time would admit" for the publication of the work.³⁴ Ramkamal's respect for Dr. Carey and his confidence in him had been amply expressed. Yet his dependence on Dr. Wilson was complete and his faith in him was absolute. The publication of the Dictionary, wrote Ramkamal, was undertaken "more in dependence" on Dr. Wilson's assistance and interest and the support of his lamented friend Capt. Roebuck than on reliance on his "own humble feeble ability".³⁵

Ramkamal subsequently made arrangements with the Serampore press, the proprietors of which not only agreed to undertake to finish the Dictionary but also to give every aid in their power to render the work as perfect and complete as possible. Felix Carey joined in his labours and the Rev. Dr. Carey and Marshman undertook to revise the last proofs before they went to press. But the types and the papers which had been used by the Calcutta press did not correspond with those offered by the Serampore press, the types in their possession being either larger or smaller than those employed in the portion printed in Calcutta. The proprietors of the Serampore press, however, offered to prepare a smaller fount, and by redoubled exertions to make up the loss of time, substituting their better manufactured paper for Patna paper. Ramkamal was induced to accept the offer and had to cancel the pages already printed.

At this stage Todd's edition of Johnson's Dictionary reached Calcutta. Many of Ramkamal's friends suggested to him to add to the translation already made by incorporating the words contained in the new edition.

Leaving the enlarged interpretation to be added by Felix Carey, Ramkamal went on with the remainder of the work.³⁶ The original plan was thus altered and further additions were made in the original manuscripts.³⁷ Ramkamal was ever anxious to incorporate new materials to make his Dictionary up-to-date.

On 31st March, 1821 a Serampore publication announced that Ramkamal Sen and Felix Carey had prepared an English-Bengali Dictionary and the same was being printed at Serampore press. The Dictionary would be published in two volumes and it would have approximately 1000 pages in all. The subscribers were to pay Rs. 50/- for both the volumes and for non-subscribers, the price had been fixed at Rs. 70/-. Intending purchasers were requested to enlist their names with Pereira of the Hindoostanee Press, Thacker of Lal Bazar or Felix Carey of Serampore³⁸

The Serampore press reprinted the portion already cancelled in a very small type on the paper first manufactured at the Serampore Mills.³⁹ At a meeting of the Asiatic Society presided over by Marquis of Hastings, on the 29th August, 1822, the Society conveyed its thanks to Ramkamal Sen and Felix Carey for their presenting "the first No. of Dictionary, English and Bengali" to the Asiatic Society.⁴⁰

In the meantime i.e. on the 10th November, 1822, at 3 p.m. Felix Carey expired. Felix was a reputed scholar and had knowledge in different Asiatic languages. Both he and Ramkamal were then engaged in the preparation of the Dictionary.⁴¹ In consequence of the death of Felix Carey, "the progress of the work was stopped".⁴²

Serampore press became busy with their own publications and Dr. Ward went to England and he was expected to resume the task of printing the Dictionary on his return. Dr. Ward, coming back to Serampore, began to reform the establishment and when he was free to finish the impression of the Dictionary, he unfortunately died.⁴³ *

In 1825, a portion of the Dictionary containing 200 pages was being sent to subscribers. It was announced that the remainder would be sent to them as and when printed. The price for hundred pages had been fixed at Rs. 6/-. A Serampore publication announced that the translator had done a very good work. He had provided

appropriate Bengali meaning of every English word. In the conclusion the editor remarked that if he presided in a judicial court, he would inflict on the criminals, the task of writing Dictionaries instead of making them work like convicts on the roads.⁴⁴ Ramkamal stated that he could "fully appreciate the force of that appropriate expression" of the said editor.⁴⁵

After sometime Ramkamal found the colour of the printed sheets changed and the letters hardly legible, the types used being greatly worn. Marshman would not print any more on that paper and with those types, under fear of bringing discredit on the press. In the meantime two small Dictionaries were issued from the Serampore press which supplied the immediate want of the schools. An enlarged edition was still urgently demanded, the manuscript being ready, Ramkamal thought that he would be overpaid, if he could get through the work and present it to the public. Therefore "in 1830, he resumed the project of the Dictionary".⁴⁶

A new arrangement was accordingly made and the first volume containing 542 pages, was completed in fourteen months.⁴⁷ On Wednesday, the 9th March, 1831 Ramkamal presented the first volume of his English-Bengali Dictionary to the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.⁴⁸ The second volume of his Dictionary comprising 560 pages was completed in two years.⁴⁹ He presented the second volume to the Asiatic Society on the 30th of April, 1834.⁵⁰ The Dictionary was dedicated to Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, the man who abolished the custom of *Sati*.

The whole Dictionary comprising 1102 pages, containing 60,000 words, was thus completed in 17 years. In the preface to his Dictionary, Ramkamal wrote that even those gentlemen of acknowledged talents and distinguished as linguists, who had undertaken similar works, with great command of time and abundant means, had not finished their volumes "in less than from seven to twenty years".⁵¹

Ramkamal had wished much to have left out words which were not current, but he found it very hazardous. Some of his European friends offered to examine the collection of the words he had prepared for translation and to mark such as they considered obsolete. He thought it to be a good plan, but he was recommended by an eminent medical gentleman to insert the words which were rarely used in conversation or writing, in as much as they frequently occurred in the course of reading. As there were differences of opinion in this respect among the Europeans themselves, in order to avoid the omis-

sion of useful words, he inserted in the first volume, all the words which he found in Todd's Johnson Dictionary, but he rejected in the second volume, all those marked in that book as obsolete.⁵²

Prior to the publication of Ramkamal Sen's Dictionary, various dictionaries had been published. The earliest work of this nature was compiled by Forster and printed in 1802. A more extensive and a highly valuable Bengali and English Dictionary was compiled by Dr. Carey and published in three quarto volumes, between 1818 and 1825* An abridgment of it, in one volume octavo, was published in 1827 by Marshman,** and he added to it, in 1828, a reversed dictionary, English and Bengali also in one octavo volume. Another dictionary of limited extent but of great utility, was published in 1828 by the Rev. Morton. Several other compilations of a similar description had appeared in Calcutta from time to time ; and in England a comprehensive and standard lexicon of Bengali, Sanskrit and English was published by Sir G. C. Haughton.* "All these publications, however, left one important department of Anglo-Bengali lexicography defective, and a dictionary of authority, English and Bengali was greatly wanted, until the present work, the Dictionary of Ram Comul Sen, made its appearance."⁵³

Sanskrit was the most ancient language of the East. The Bengali language borrowing from Sanskrit might have become rich but the state of development of the Bengali language in the early nineteenth century was too poor and it could not stand any comparison with a rich language like English. If Ramkamal could borrow freely from Sanskrit, the parent of the Bengali language, for explaining technical and scientific terms, he might in a great measure, if not entirely, have conveyed their precise meaning. He did not do that for the terms so borrowed would be as difficult and unintelligible to Bengalis as any European tongue. He, therefore, had given such an interpretation as appeared likely to make them generally understood. It had yet to be decided whether the scientific and technical terms of the European languages when studied by the Indians should be explained in Sanskrit and Arabic or whether the English terms should be retained. Richardson, Gladwin, Gilchrist, Colebroke, Forster and other distinguished orientalists who had translated English into the Asiatic languages, had almost entirely passed over them in their several valuable works upon the languages of the East. Ramkamal, naturally confessed that great defects would be found in the interpretation of technical terms in the dictionary some of which he had left undefined.

He left them as they stood, adding after the English name, the words, সংজ্ঞা বিশেষ. His object was to explain the general signification of the word.⁵⁴

In translating names of animals and vegetables not belonging to India, he used very indefinite terms. Thus when interpreting the name of a tree, he had called it by the general term বৃক্ষ and a tree বৃক্ষ বিশেষ. He made no distinction between the words tree, plant, herb, weed etc. as the Bengali word বৃক্ষ or গাছ was applicable to all.⁵⁵ To explain the grasses, the meaning had been given thus ঘাসের গাছ; creepers thus, লতা বৃক্ষ. There were, however, distinct species viz. বৃক্ষ, বনস্পতি, বিটপী, শাখী, তরু, লতা, নগ, পাদপ. Animals, birds, insects etc. had been translated thus, জীব বা জন্তুবিশেষ a term applicable to all animals without any reference to their species. He used words which were pure Sanskrit, and Prakrit terms derived from them, and subsequently corrupted, as well as Persian, Arabic, Portuguese and a few English words, which had become current in Bengali. He might have confined himself to pure Bengali called 'Sadu Bha'sa' but his object was to enlarge the renderings by as many synonyms as he could find, to enable the reader to form his own judgment of the words in both languages.

In interpreting the verbs, he was in difficulty at several places for want of adequate terms or Bengali verbs conveying the same meaning as the English. To remove this defect, he found it necessary to make choice of verbs chiefly with regard to their Sanskrit origin. A list of roots borrowed from Sanskrit, and used in Bengali, amounting to 1391 was annexed to the dictionary. Pure and corrupted Sanskrit, 711, Banga or of no defined origin, supposed to be the language of Gour, 680. Verbs used both in an active as well as in a passive sense, he endeavoured to make as distinct as possible by adding the words কৃ and হ after each verb, thus To Swear, v.a. শপথ কৃ To Swear, v.n. শপথকারী হ।⁵⁶

Dr. Wilson wrote an excellent article on Ramkamal's Dictionary in 1835. In the said article he critically analysed the Dictionary. He pointed out that in compilation of a reversed dictionary of a foreign tongue, in which English words were to be represented by equivalents in another language, the compiler had various classes of terms to deal with, of which the translation varies "from easy to impossible".⁵⁷ It would not be difficult to find corresponding words for the names of sensible objects, as 'man', 'tree', 'sun', 'mountain'; for

their most familiar attributes, as 'strong', 'weak', 'large', 'small'; for actions of daily life 'to hear', 'to see', 'to sleep'; for natural wants, as 'hunger', 'thirst'; for feelings and passions inherent in human nature, or for the ordinary operations of the mind of man, at least amongst civilized nations. But, even in these denominations, great and sometimes insuperable difficulties would occur. The natural products of one country and climate, in species at least, if not in genus, might not exist nor be known in another region or clime; the names of known things might be applied idiomatically or metaphorically to objects peculiar to people or places; wants, feelings, and notions would be variously modified or multiplied in different conditions of society and by diversities of climate, political institutions, and religious practices or belief.⁵⁸

Words, therefore, would be impracticable to render, except by analogy or paraphrase and the same would necessarily apply to all expressions that were local and conventional and to all technical and scientific nomenclature. These difficulties were of comparatively little magnitude, in the way of compiling dictionaries of the languages of the West. The case was different when a dialect of Europe was to be placed in juxtaposition with a dialect of Asia. In the two countries, the climate, the natural products, and man in a vast variety of social relations, were diametrically opposed, and the terms, therefore that were current in the one, could have no counterparts whatever in the other. It was as impossible to render 'Esquire' into Bengali, as it was to express 'Brahman' in English. Words such as 'abbot', 'alderman', 'heraldry', 'lily', 'oak', 'Parliament', 'Zootomy' would be readily converted into any continental tongue, but they were not translatable into any Asiatic language.⁵⁹

Dr. Wilson wrote that these perplexities were "inseparable from the nature of undertaking". But it would be found that Ramkamal had "in general struggled with them successfully". Neither did he claim nor could it be said that he had "invariably" given the best equivalents that the term admitted, or that he had never "misconceived the purport of an English expression". But it could be said that in almost every case he had supplied a choice of equivalents for English words that might be rendered into Bengali. He also furnished sufficiently accurate explanations for those which were untranslatable.⁶⁰

Dr. Wilson cited some examples from the dictionary to prove his

assertion which would at the same time serve as specimens of the plan Ramkamal had actually adopted to compile the dictionary.

Man, N. S. Sax. নৰ, মনুষ্য, মানুষ, মানব, পুৰুষ, জন, ব্যক্তি, মন্দ, বয়স্ৰাণ, লোক, জ্ঞান, চাকৰ, ভূতা, অধীন ব্যক্তি, পাৰিষদ, অবজ্ঞাসূচক সম্বোধন—যথা বেটা, কোন মানুষ, কোন অসাধাৰণ গুণ বিশিষ্ট পুৰুষ, কোন বিষয়ে উপযুক্ত মনুষ্য, ধনী বা স্বতন্ত্ৰ বা অনধীন ব্যক্তি, দ্ৰান্ত ব্যক্তি, স্বজ্ঞান বহিৰ্ভূত ব্যক্তি।

Here had been given eight synonyms for the simple substantive; then followed the equivalents for 'adult', 'man servant', 'follower', 'dependent' or 'attendant'. The use of the word as a vocative particle was satisfactorily expressed. The following instances of the local and conventional use of word had also been given :

Man of war, n.s. যুদ্ধৰ জাহাজ, i.e. a ship of war.

Man-midwife, n.s. ধাত্রী বা ধাত্রীৰ কৰ্ম কৰে যে পুৰুষ, পুৰুষ দাই। Here was an interesting term, of which no mere Asiatic could conceive the sense; for the employment of a man in such duties would be to him an utter impossibility. It was, accordingly, first rendered by the simple term dha'tri', 'a midwife', qualified by the explanation, 'or a man who does the business of one'. Then came a literal rendering, purush dai, "a man-midwife".⁶¹

To man, v.s. Sax. মানুষ-দা বা সবববাহ-ক, মনুষ্য যুদ্ধ-ক বা তপ্ৰাৰা চৌকি-দা, মনুষ্যদ্বাৰা সৈন্য প্ৰস্তুত-ক, মনুষ্য যোগা, মনুষ্যদা লোকেতে সমজ-ক, দত্ত-ক, শক্ত-ক, মজবুত-ক, বাজপক্ষি-পোষ কা-পাল বা বশ ক, সেবা ক, ভূতা বা চাকৰেৰ ন্যায় বুদ্ধ বা হাজিৰ থাকিয়া কৰ্ম-ক, দাসত্ব-ক গোলামি-ক।

It would be seen, then, in this term, the idiomatic use of a noun as a verb, which the synonyms of 'man', in Bengali, could not be applied to; but its senses were rendered intelligibly enough by compounds, purporting—to give or supply men—to appoint or station them—to prepare an armament with them; also, to be or make firm or resolute—to be strong—to rear or tame a hawk—to perform servile offices.⁶²

An example or two from the verbs would be taken; but the greater number of them, especially, expressive of ordinary actions, were copiously interpreted. Thus 'to do' had twenty-six interpretations in the active, and seventeen in the neuter verb, besides illustrations of its use as an auxiliary and expletive. 'To go' had seventy-eight synonyms or explanations, besides its compound forms 'to go about', 'to go aside', etc. This verb, indeed, strikingly exemplified the difficulty of rendering intelligibly even familiar words, when they

were used in writing or in speech in conventional significations very remote from their primitive import. It would appear very unaccountable to a foreigner, unless he had analogous idioms in his own language, for a verb originally implying 'to go', to be made to denote
 অন্যের সহবাস-কৃ 'to dwell with another', হ্রাস-হ 'to be shortened', নাশ বা মৃত্যুপযোগী-হ "to suffer destruction or death", কথিত-হ 'to be said', জ্ঞাত-হ 'to be known', গর্ভবতী-হ 'to be pregnant', অর্থেবিস্তার-কৃ 'to be diffused', ভারী-হ 'to be heavy', প্রদান-কৃ 'to give', শেষ বা অন্ত-হ 'to be finished'. Such senses were scarcely recognised in the verb 'to go', when Englishmen found them in this form ; but a reference to the examples collected by the English lexicographer would show that, in common parlance or in construction, they repeatedly occurred.

The verb 'to take' had a hundred and four equivalents, besides compounds, as,

To take care—সাবধান-হ, খবরদার-হ, সতর্ক-হ, চেষ্টিত-হ, যাচমান-হ, অধ্যক্ষতা-কৃ, রক্ষা-কৃ ।

To take in (lit.) অন্তর্গত-কৃ, to diminish, কমা-কৃ, to cheat, ঠগা ।

To take notice, মনোযোগ-কৃ, অবধান কৃ ।

To take off, (lit.) দ্বন্দ্ব-ল-কৃ, নষ্ট-কৃ, to buy ক্রয়-কৃ to imitate, আদর্শ-কৃ ।

To take on, (to sorrow) আত্যন্তিক দুঃখিত বা খেদিত-হ ।

To take up with (to be content with) পরিতুষ্ট-হ, (to abide with) বসতি-কৃ ।

Many other compounds of this verb were given, for all of which satisfactory representatives were found ; the same occurred in other instances and occasionally some curious analogies occurred in the construction of the compound. Thus 'to throw up' was, in Bengali as well as in English, 'to vomit' as well as 'to cast on high', বমন-কৃ, উৎক্ষেপ-কৃ । This analogy would have more extensively recurred, had the compiler availed himself more liberally than he had done of Sanskrit compound verbs, or verbs in composition with prepositions, which offered in their combined form frequent resemblances to the Latin and German compound verbs, whence English were derived.

Ramkamal had rarely employed Sanskrit compounds of this class, although, as he stated in his preface, he was obliged to have recourse to the simple Sanskrit roots to represent English verbs.⁶⁴

He had also given a list of Bengali radicals, amounting to 1391, of which, he observed, 711 were pure or corrupted Sanskrit and 680 of uncertain origin, supposed to be the language of Gour. Dr. Wilson categorically remarked that this was "a mistake ; for the greater number of those, said to be uncertain" was also Sanskrit.⁶⁵

Ramkamal confessed that he did not possess such an intimate knowledge of the English and the Sanskrit languages, as might enable him to compile a lexicon with that accuracy, which was desirable. He, therefore, had no hesitation in acknowledging that numerous errors might be found in the present work and that he might sometimes have given a misinterpretation of the words in Bengali, but at the same time he might add that he had spared neither pains nor expense to render the work as useful as his abilities could admit of.

This was the first dictionary of the kind which had appeared in print, and as no dictionary of a foreign language could be brought to perfection at once, and by one individual, he left it to more competent persons to revise and correct the present work in a future edition.

He also suggested to those disposed to such an undertaking, that if they would translate it into the other languages of Hindoostan it might become extensively useful to the people of India.⁶⁶

It would be quite interesting to show how Ramkamal translated some English words connected with the manners, Civil Institutions, Science and Religion of the English people into Bengali for which no counterparts in Bengali could exist.

Beau-monde, n.s. Fr. ভোজনোত্তে বা পানোত্তে বা বস্ত্ৰ পৰিধান বিষয়ে জগদ্বীতানুসাৰে সন্মত চেষ্টা কৰে যে, সন্মতী, সন্মত ভোগী ।

Literally those persons who particularly studied worldly usages, especially in regard to dress and eating and drinking.

Parliament, n.s. Lat. ইংলণ্ডদেশে মহাসভা, বাহাতে ধৰ্ম্মসংক্রান্ত রাজসংক্রান্ত কুলীন ও সাধাৰণ লোকেৰা একত্ৰ হইয়া বা পৃথক্ৰূপে ৰাজ্যেৰ ভদ্ৰাভদ্ৰ বা কৰ্ত্তব্যাকৰ্ত্তব্য বিবেচনা কৰেন, এক প্ৰকাৰ মহাপঞ্চাইৎ ।

A great Council in England, where persons of family, ennobled by their offices, or the king, and persons who were commoners, discussed, together or separately, what was good or evil for the kingdom, and what was and was not to be done. A sort of great punchayet.

Anatomy, n.s. Gr. ব্যৱচ্ছেদবিদ্যা, ব্যৱচ্ছেদকৰণ, শৰীৰব্যৱচ্ছেদ বা অবলম্বীভূত কৰণবিদ্যা, ব্যৱচ্ছেদবিদ্যা শব্দৰা শৰীৰনিৰ্ম্মান বিষয়জ্ঞাত হওণ ; কক্ষাল ; শব্দক্টি নকদৰ্শিকাৰ অতিকীৰ্ত্তন ।

The science or practice of dissection ; the science of cutting up the body or separating the members, the object of which was to obtain a knowledge of the structure of the body ; a skeleton ; a man very emaciate and of hideous and miserable appearance. The Sanskrit term Vyavachheda, had been naturalized in Calcutta, at least by its application "to a tract on anatomy by Felix Carey", which had found some currency amongst the Bengalis.⁶⁷

Messiah, n.s. Heb. *মসীহ* নাম, যাহার উপাধি জগদ্বাতা, কুশল মঙ্গল বা স্থিৰৰাজ, তাৰণ কৰ্ত্তা। A name of Christ equivalent to the title of Saviour of the world, auspicious, blessed or eternal king ; the being that enabled men to pass over or beyond the world. The latter, *ta'raṇa kerta'*, was an epithet common amongst the Hindus for the especial object of their adoration.⁶⁸

Dr. Wilson commented that Ramkamal Sen's work had filled up an important chasm in the cultivation of the Bengali language and that it had filled it up in a manner which reflected "the highest credit upon his talents, his acquirements, his industry and his perseverance". This work would be of the highest benefit to European students of the Bengali language, but it would be still more serviceable to Bengalis. It would bring infinitely nearer to those who were acquainted with English the stores of European literature and science ; and it would furnish them with classical and expressive means of communicating those stores to others to whom English was unknown. Ramkamal Sen, therefore, had not only enriched his mother tongue "by the accession of some thousand terms for new ideas" but he had paved the way for "the wide dissemination of truth and knowledge amongst the inhabitants of Bengal".⁶⁹

"The author of the Dictionary acquired his knowledge of English under less favourable circumstances", but the work he had published sufficiently testified that "his studies were not the less successful".⁷⁰ This was not extraordinary to those who knew this eminent individual, and who were acquainted with his clearness and promptness of apprehension, his thirst for information, and his quiet, unremitting application.

At the time of the publication of the Dictionary he was the Dewan to the Bank of Bengal—a situation imposing heavy responsibility, constant attendance and extreme labour. His earlier appointment was in the Mint which was no less laborious and responsible. He held office under the General Committee of Public Instruction. He was the Native Secretary to the Asiatic Society, an efficient manager

of the Hindu College, a member of the Calcutta School Book Society, and a member of various other Associations, either of a public or private character, the subject of which was the moral and intellectual amelioration of the people of India. Ramkamal Sen wrote Dr. Wilson, had "contributed more than any individual in Calcutta to diffuse correctness of information, liberality of feeling, and love of knowledge, amongst his fellows", and had "established an indisputable right to be denominated the friend and benefactor of his country".⁷¹

Ramkamal was not unaware of Dr. Johnson's remarks that of all men who toiled in the irksome employments of life, who were rather driven by the fear of evil than attracted by the prospect of good, who were disgraced by miscarriage and punished for neglect, and whose success would gain no applause, or diligence no reward, the writer of dictionaries was the most unhappy, and mankind had justly considered him not as the disciple, but as the slave of science. He was the pioneer of literature, doomed only to remove the rubbish, and clear the obstacles from the paths, thorough which those in pursuit of learning and genius marched to conquest and glory, without bestowing a smile on the humble drudge who facilitated their progress. In a word every other author aspired to the need of praises and profit, but a Lexicographer was very fortunate if he could escape reproach and critical vituperation.⁷²

Authors of dictionaries were pioneers and their work—a drudgery. To Ramkamal the work was not merely a drudgery, he called it "dry", because he "felt it so".⁷³ Dr. Wilson's constructive criticism brought some comforts to him. In 1835, he wrote that Parbury Allen & Co., the Publishers of the Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register had sent him four copies of the papers published by Dr. Wilson about his Dictionary in that periodical. The article made him happy, for, he wrote that it was more than he deserved. In the said letter he also acknowledged the receipt of the packet containing more copies of the article sent by Dr. Wilson which Ramkamal "distributed amongst friends". Whatever he got, he would never forget that it was owing to Dr. Wilson's interest and there was "no limit to bounty and liberality" shown to him by that great orientalist.⁷⁴

To Rev. Long, Ramkamal's dictionary—the result of twenty years' labour—would "long remain as a monument of his diligence and critical acumen" and it would entitle him "to the epithet of the Johnson of Bengal".⁷⁵ The Friend of India, then the leading English Journal in the country and under the editorial management of J. C.

Marshman spoke of Ramkamal's dictionary that it was by far the fullest and most valuable work of its kind and it would be the most lasting monument of his industry, zeal and education. It was possibly the work by which his name would be best recognized in posterity.⁷⁶

Reference Notes

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2. Ibid., p. 235.
3. J. Long, *Peeps into Social Life in Calcutta a Century ago*, *Transactions of the Bengal Social Science Association*, Vol. II, Part II, Calcutta, 1868, p. 204.
4. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*; translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 17.
5. H. H. Wilson, *Ram Comul Sen's Bengali Dictionary*, *Asiatic Journal & Monthly Register*, Vol. XVI, New Series, January-April, 1835, p. 235.
6. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 18.
- * The full title of Forster's work was—"A vocabulary in two parts, English and Bengali and Vice Versa by H. P. Forster, Senior Merchant on the Bengal Establishment. Printed at Calcutta from the Press of Ferris and Co., 1799. Dedicated to Thomas Graham, Esq., dated, December 15, 1799." The first part of the vocabulary was published in 1799, while the Second Part appeared in 1802.
In spite of great difficulties, Forster succeeded in compiling one of the most valuable and painstaking lexicons of the language ever published, and the eulogy of Marshman that Forster was the "most eminent Bengali Scholar till the appearance of Dr. Carey" was possibly fully justified. S. K. De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century, 1800-1825*, Calcutta, 1919, p. 90-92.
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17. Letter of Ramkamal to Capt. Roebuck, 22nd February, 1817, Progs. of the Council of the College of Fort William, Home Misc. 564.
18. Capt. Roebuck to Dr. Carey, 25th February, 1817, Progs. of the Council of the College of Fort William, Home Misc. 564.
19. Letter from Dr. Carey to Capt. Roebuck, 2nd March, 1817, Progs. of the Council of the College of Fort William, Home Misc. 564.
- * Mr. A. Trotter, Actg. Secy. to Government wrote to Mr. J. H. Harington, President and Members of the College Council on the 22nd March, 1817 that "in compliance with Captain Roebuck's request" instructions had been "issued to Sub-Treasurer to pay to him the sum of Sicca Rupees 100 monthly for a period of two years . . . to aid him in the publication of the revised and enlarged edition of Dr. Hunter's Hindoostanee and English Dictionary in which" Capt. Roebuck was engaged.
Progs. of the Council of the College of Fort William, Home Misc. 564.
20. Ramkamal's letter to Capt. Roebuck, 18th March, 1817. Progs. of the Council of the College of Fort William, Home Misc. 564.
21. Letter from Roebuck to Mr. Trotter, 25th March, 1817, Progs. of the Council of the College of Fort William, Home Misc. 564.
22. Letter from Mr. A. Trotter to Mr. Harington, 29th March, 1817, Progs. of the Council of the College of Fort William, Home Misc. 564.
23. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 8.
24. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. H. H. Wilson, Calcutta, 28 November, 1835, MSS Eur. E. 301/2.
25. First Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1818, p. 14.
26. Ibid., p. 15.
27. Ibid., p. 16.
28. Second Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1818-19, p. 21.
29. Ibid., Appendix No. XII, p. 57.
30. Ibid., pp. 58-59.
31. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, Preface, p. 6.
32. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 27 September, 1820, MSS Eur. E. 301/1.
33. Third Report of the Calcutta School Book Society, 1819-20, p. 19.
34. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 27 October, 1820, MSS Eur. E. 301/8.
35. Ibid., Calcutta, 27th September, 1820, MSS Eur. E. 301/1
36. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 6.
37. Ibid., p. 7.

38. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Calcutta, Vol. I, 1377 B.S., p. 62.
 39. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 7.
 40. Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. 3, p. 151.
 41. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Calcutta, Vol. I, 1377 B.S., p. 42.
 42. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 7.
 43. Ibid.
 - * He died of cholera at Serampore in March, 1823.
 44. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed., *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Calcutta, Vol. I, 3rd ed., 1377 B.S., p. 69.
 45. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 8.
 46. P. C. Mittra,—*Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 42.
 47. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 7.
 48. Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. 4, p. 114.
 49. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 7.
 50. Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. 5, p. 29.
 51. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 7.
 52. Ibid., Preface, p. 15.
 - * A Dictionary of the Bengalee language, in which words were traced to their origin and their meanings were given in 2 vols., published in 1815 and 1825 respectively. Vol. I was reprinted in 1818. The Second volume was in 2 parts. All Bengali-English. Printed at the Mission Press, Serampore. The Dictionary comprehended about 2000 quarto pages and about 80000 words. S. K. De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century, 1800-1825*, Calcutta, 1919, p. 133.
 - ** The objection taken to this Dictionary on account of its bulk, was subsequently removed by the publication of an abridgement, prepared under Carey's own superintendence by J. Marshman and printed in 1827. Most of the compound and derivative terms were omitted and the publication was reduced to one thick octavo volume. Although this abridgement had the advantage of being more readily consulted, it did not by any means obviate the necessity of the original.
- Marshman's Dictionary was in 2 Vols. The 1st Vol. was an abridgement of the Preceding Dictionary of Carey (Bengali-English), the 2nd was a Dictionary, English and Bengali, compiled by J. C. Marshman. 1st ed., Vol. I, 1827 : Vol. II, 1828. S. K. De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century, 1800-1825*, Calcutta, 1919, p. 152.

53. H. H. Wilson, *Ram Comul Sen's Bengali Dictionary*, *Asiatic Journal & Monthly Register*, Vol. XVI, New Series, January-April, 1835, p. 224.
- * Dictionary Bengali and Sanskrit explained in English and adapted for students of either language ; to which is added an Index, serving as a Reversed Dictionary by Sir Graves C. Haughton, London, 1833.
54. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 15.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., Preface. p. 16.
57. H. H. Wilson, *Ramcomul Sen's Bengali Dictionary*, *Asiatic Journal & Monthly Register*, Vol. XVI, New Series, January-April, 1835, p. 225.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., p. 226.
60. Ibid., p. 227.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., p. 230.
64. Ibid., p. 231.
65. Ibid., p. 232.
66. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 16.
67. H. H. Wilson, *Ram Comul Sen's Bengali Dictionary*, *Asiatic Journal & Monthly Register*, Vol. XVI, New Series, January-April, 1835, p. 232.
68. Ibid., p. 233.
69. Ibid., p. 235.
70. Ibid., p. 236.
71. Ibid.
72. Ram Comul Sen, *A Dictionary in English and Bengalee*, translated from Todd's Edition of Johnson's English Dictionary in two vols., Vol. II, Serampore, 1834, Preface, p. 6.
73. Ibid., Preface. p. 7.
74. Ramkamal's letter to Dr. Wilson, Calcutta, 28 November, 1835. MSS. Eur. E. 301/2.
75. J. Long, *Early Bengali Literature & Newspapers*, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XIII, No. XXV, January-June, 1850, p. 142.
76. *The Friend of India*, quoted in P. C. Mittra, *Life of Dewan Ram Comul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 42.

Public Health, Charity and Ramkamal

Section—I

The Fever Hospital and Municipal Improvements

In the early nineteenth century, diseases like fever, dysentery and similar other disorders were common among the poor Indian population living in the town of Calcutta and its suburbs. Martin, the Surgeon of the Native Hospital*, brought this issue** in 1835 to the attention of the Governors of that hospital. A printed note was circulated by Martin pointing out the necessity of an asylum for these helpless Indians.¹

Dr. A. R. Jackson who also received a copy of Martin's note wrote to him in reply on the 19th May, 1835 that he had given the note to Ramkamal Sen, whose assistance he "was anxious to secure in the arrangement of the scheme". At his suggestion a set of hints prepared by Ramkamal Sen exhibiting the feeling of the Indian population on this subject was sent to Martin. The idea of establishing a fever hospital was fully endorsed by Dr. Jackson and Ramkamal Sen.²

A special meeting of the Governors of the Native Hospital was held on the 20th May, 1835 when all the connected papers including a series of practical observations by Ramkamal Sen were laid before the meeting.³

The hints and practical observations of Ramkamal Sen would be helpful in ascertaining his attitude to certain prejudices of the Hindu population. Ramkamal stated that there were a number of institutions to render medical relief to Europeans in Calcutta. For the Indian population there existed only a Native Hospital and two dispensaries. The Native Hospital was primarily meant for patients labouring under external and accidental injuries.⁴ They were usually sent by the police to that hospital. It was the hospital where servants of Europeans were sent for medical care.⁵

The Indian population who suffered from fever and other diseases were "averse to accept the relief held out by this institution." The people would rather "die in their huts and cottages"* than accept medical relief from the Native Hospital for the simple reason that the

hospital admitted indiscriminately and without separate accommodation "patients of all classes and castes".⁴

The fever being the most common disease of the period in Calcutta, the causes of that disease had been systematically analysed in the suggestion of Ramkamal Sen. The poor people had to depend on the tanks for the wholesome water but Ramkamal pointed out that the water available from those tanks was mostly unwholesome and productive of diseases. Even the water of the Ganges, considered by the Hindus as most pure and sacred had been described by Ramkamal as "insalubrious and filthy."⁷ The sewers were in a very offensive state in most parts of the town. A large number of shallow tanks containing worst quality of water, became a positive source of diseases. On both sides of the drains privies were allowed to remain and no steps were taken to clean them. The town could not be a healthy place unless efforts were made to keep it clean.⁸ In the suburbs the situation was more desperate. Drains were badly kept. Marshy places, crowded gardens and stagnant water were helping to produce malaria.⁹

The poor Indians mostly lived in huts in Calcutta. The poor people coming from different parts of the country to the town for various reasons lived either with their poor relatives or in the rented huts in unhealthy circumstances. The economic condition of this class of people was so bad that they had to live almost "naked".¹⁰ Spreading leaves on the ground, they had to lie down in their cells or holes. Therefore, it was no unusual affair for those people to be affected with diseases like fever or cholera.

When people contacted fever or cholera, they had practically none to attend on them nor had they means enough to purchase suitable medical aids, clothing, bed or food. They could not have even the wholesome water to drink. The disease, therefore, took no time to become violent and the recovery of the patients seemed difficult. Friends of such patients being alarmed usually procured for them either boats or *doolies* to carry them to their families in countries which they never or seldom reached. Boatmen or bearers often put them on the *ghauts* and bank of the river, where helpless victims expired in a few hours or were attacked and killed by the beasts of prey before their natural death.¹¹

The most convenient mode of disposing a dying patient was to carry him to the bank of the river and place him under the care of

some hired man at the *ghauts*. The hired man was expected to look after him till the final dissolution of the patient. This custom had the backing of the Hindu belief that when a man had no hope of survival, he should better die on the bank of the holy stream. This mode was very often adopted by the landlords and friends of the victims just to avoid harassment of the police in case they allowed the patients to die in their huts. This custom was known as *unterjale*.* Ramkamal called it '*Ghaut Murder*'.¹²

Ramkamal considered that a hospital on a moderate scale in the "central part" of the Indian town to receive such helpless and friendless sick Indian people was essential. The hospital should be the place where they could obtain medical aid and an asylum during convalescence.¹³

In his evidence before the First Sub-Committee upon the Fever Hospital and Municipal Improvements,** Ramkamal clarified in greater detail his ideas of the proposed hospital. He said that his countrymen were not used to hospitals. They did not know or understand a hospital and whatever had to be done about it, "ought to be done with caution, consulting their feelings".¹⁴

If however, their feelings and prejudices were left unattended, they would rather die for want of care and medical aid than go to a public hospital for treatment and recovery. Therefore, Ramkamal warned that the purpose of the proposed hospital would be frustrated if the rigid rules and practices of the existing Native Hospital were introduced in the proposed institution. "My ideas", said Ramkamal, were "always for moderation". He did not like to be defeated if he could help it.¹⁵

In those days fires caused considerable damage to properties, particularly of the people living in huts and cottages.* Reports would not be wanting to prove that people even were burnt to death in such fires. Such a report had been recorded in the proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. In May, 1837, the Secretary of the Society reported the death of *Behadur*, the pensioned *Farash* who had been on the establishment since the time of Sir William Jones. He was burnt to death with his wife, "in one of the late dreadful conflagrations".¹⁶ Again, in the seventh Annual Report of the District Charitable Society it had been stated that the Leper Asylum was "totally annihilated" by fire. "Two of the most helpless of the poor patients perished in the flames".¹⁷ The Municipal Committee made an attempt to find out the causes of these dreadful fires in the town and to suggest measures

to remedy the evil. The evidence given by Ramkamal Sen would show that he had intimate knowledge of the poor people living in the town. A question was put to him whether to compel people to build huts with mud walls and tiled roofs instead of mat walls and straw roofs by a compulsory law would be suitable for the town. "By no means", was the answer of Ramkamal Sen.¹⁸ Ramkamal said that two third of the huts were built by the ryots themselves on the rented land. If any compulsory law was passed it would fall on the "poorer classes and not upon the richer, and it would be considered a forcible measure".¹⁹ If the law was enacted the poor people would go to the suburbs to live in the huts again. It would be just removing the evils to the suburbs.²⁰ He suggested that the town should be divided into districts. A committee for each district to be appointed with power to decide whether straw huts to be built at a certain place within their jurisdiction or not.²¹ These committees were to be composed of local inhabitants. People would not like to build *pucka* houses near the huts because such houses were also burnt in conflagrations. The Committee would see the interest of all classes of people within their jurisdiction.²² Ramkamal had an "intimate acquaintance with the conditions of the poorer classes and an earnest desire to protect them".²³ He had discerning eyes to see that the poverty of the masses was responsible for the spread of the diseases like fever and cholera and also for the untimely death of a large number of people. He was of the opinion that superstitions and evil customs also hastened the death of many persons affected with such diseases. It is relevant to note that Ramkamal, leading a traditional Hindu life had the broadness of mind to realise the evil effects of some of the manners and customs prevalent among the ignorant poverty-stricken Indians. In his analysis he showed that the evil practices had their roots in the age old poverty of the Indian people.

Reference Notes

- * The originator of the plan of the Native Hospital was the Rev. John Owen, a chaplain. The plan was proposed in 1793. Cornwallis bestowed on the institution a monthly grant of Rs. 600/-. A sum of Rs. 54,000/- was raised from private subscriptions. The hospital was established on the Chitpur Road. It was opened on the 1st September, 1794. Rev. J. Long, *Calcutta in the Olden Time Its Localities. Nineteenth Century Studies, No. 5, January, 1974, p. 26.*
- * * The situation I hold at the Native Hospital, afforded me daily opportunities of witnessing, on a large scale, the misery and death produced by the inundation of 1833, among the native inhabitants of Calcutta and the surrounding country. Natives of respectability have assured me that in the villages to the south and east of us, half the occupants of each house died of fever during that year ; some even went much beyond this estimate ; but admitting both accounts to be exaggerated, the real amount of suffering must be admitted to have been terrible. Martin's observation quoted in the *Friend of India*, 18th June, 1835.
- 1. Proceedings of the Governors of the Native Hospital Relative to the Establishment of a Fever Hospital for the Relief of Natives Together with Notes Relating to the State of Calcutta and Its Suburbs, Appendix 'A', p. ii.
- 2. Ibid., p. 15.
- 3. Ibid., p. ii.
- 4. Ibid., p. 16.
- 5. P. C. Mittra. *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 35.
- 6. Proceedings of the Governors of the Native Hospital Relative to the Establishment of a Fever Hospital for the Relief of Natives Together with Notes Relating to the State of Calcutta and Its Suburbs, Appendix 'A', p. 16.
- 7. Ibid. p. 17.
- 8. Ibid.,
- 9. Ibid.
- 10. Ibid., p. 18.
- 11. Ibid.
- * On the 19th September, 1832, Chandra Kumar Tagore, a brother of Prasanna Kumar Tagore expired. Two days before his death he was taken to the bank of the river Hooghly. He performed the rites of *unterjale*. To fulfil the last desire of Chandrakumar, Prasanna Kumar took the initiative to take him to the river. Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay ed. *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. II. Calcutta, 1384 B.S., pp. 419-420.
- Ramkamal himself before his final dissolution lived for twenty-one days on the river. He "departed this life on the banks of the River Hooghly at Goreefah". He, however, did not perform the rites of *unterjale*.
- 12. Proceedings of the Governors of the Native Hospital Relative to the Establishment of a Fever Hospital for the Relief of Natives Together with Notes Relating to the State of Calcutta and Its Suburbs. Appendix 'A', p. 19.
- 13. Ibid.

****** At a meeting on the 20th May, 1835 the Governors of the Native Hospital took the initiative to establish a fever hospital in the central part of the Indian town of Calcutta. The resolutions passed at the meeting were sent to the Government. A Committee was formed on that date for the purpose. Ramkamal Sen was a member of that Committee. (Appendix A. Proceedings of the Governors of the Native Hospital Relative to the Establishment of a Fever Hospital for the Relief of Natives Together with Notes Relating to the State of Calcutta and Its Suburbs, pp. i-vi)

Subsequently, however, it was thought proper to hold a public meeting on the subject. On the 18th June, 1835, a public meeting of the inhabitants of the town was held at the Town Hall, Calcutta. A Committee was formed at that meeting. In fact some more members were added to the original Committee composed on the 20th May, 1835. The Committee was a mixed body of Indian and European gentlemen. (Appendix B. Containing the Correspondence of the Committee on the Fever Hospital and Municipal Improvements with the Government of Bengal. No. 6, p. 7.) Though the Committee members were selected by the public meeting and all the members were important inhabitants of the town yet the Committee did not get the approval of the Government at once. For about a year it remained an unofficial Committee.

It was in the year 1836. Lord Auckland took interest in the matter and on the 24th May, he wrote to Dr. J. R. Martin as follows :

"Your plans do not stop with the establishment of an Hospital, but extend to the formation of Local Improvements, and to an endeavour to remove or mitigate the natural causes of disease. Your letter does not point out by what means it is proposed that the desired improvements of this kind shall be effected". Lord Auckland, therefore, desired the Committee to take into consideration "some plan of judicious and adequate local Taxation, and independent Local Management". At the desire of Lord Auckland two more members were added to the Committee. The Committee became an official one and it was called the "Committee, appointed by the Right Honourable the Governor of Bengal for the establishment of a Fever Hospital and for inquiring into Local Management and Taxation in Calcutta". The Committee was also popularly known as the "Committee upon the Fever Hospital and Municipal Improvements".

The Committee divided itself into three sub-committees ; the first, "to inquire into the present system of assessing, collecting and appropriating the House and Akbaree Taxes" ; the second, "to inquire into the present state and Management of the Conservancy Department ;" and the third "to conduct all measures connected with the proposed Fever Hospital, and the circulation of subscription books for donations and subscriptions". Ramkamal Sen resigned from the Committee in November, 1836 and in his place Prasanna Kumar Tagore was appointed. (Report of the Committee Appointed by the Right Honourable the Governor of Bengal for the Establishment of a Fever Hospital and for Inquiring into Local Management and Taxation in Calcutta. Calcutta, 1839, pp. 6-7).

14. Appendix C, Evidence Taken by the First Sub-Committee upon the Fever Hospital and Municipal Improvements, Calcutta, 1838, p. civ.
15. Ibid.

- * The Assessors' Return states the number of straw huts in Calcutta to have been 31,462 and of tiled huts 16,587, total 48,049. Of these, according to Captain Frederick William Birch, the Superintendent of the Police of Calcutta and the Collector of Assessment, 7174 have been burnt between the 1st January and the 1st May or about 15 per cent of the whole ; of which number 5900 or about 1/8th of the whole, appear to have been destroyed in the month of April alone. (Appendix B. Containing the Correspondence of the Committee on the Fever Hospital and Municipal Improvements with the Government of Bengal. No. 12, Municipal Inquiry Committee's Report to Government on the Late Fires, Calcutta, 18th May, 1837, p. 26.)
16. Progs. Asiatic Society of Bengal, meeting dated the 3rd May, 1837. Vol. 5, p. 117.
 17. Seventh Report of the District Charitable Society, Calcutta, MDCCCXXXVII. (1837), p. 21.
 18. Appendix C. Evidence Taken by the First Sub-Committee upon the Fever Hospital and Municipal Improvements, Calcutta, 1838, p. ciii.
 19. Ibid., p. ci.
 20. Ibid.
 21. Ibid., p. cii.
 22. Ibid.
 23. P. C. Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 35.

Section—II

The District Charitable Society

The District Charitable Society was brought into being in February, 1830 for the purpose of giving relief to the distressed Europeans and others under a system of vigilant inspection. The town of Calcutta and suburbs were divided into districts and each district was sub-divided into sections, each under the supervision of a sub-committee who appointed a visiting member and a paid sub-inspector.¹ Every application for assistance was first enquired into by the sub-inspector and then by the visiting member. The applicant was required to be present at the meeting of the committee when the application would be finally disposed of.²

An address was circulated by Ramkamal Sen requesting the wealthy Indians to support the Society. He pointed out the evil effects of indiscriminate largesses. He discouraged the traditional mode of giving alms to the poor by the wealthy Indians living in the town of Calcutta. He wrote that the crowds of squalid mendicants, who gathered together from distant parts on the occasion of the death of the opulent Indians were exposed to painful, wearisome and contagious diseases and even to the loss of life.³

In 1834, Ramkamal Sen, Dwarkanath Tagore and Rustomjee Cowasjee were elected Vice Presidents of the Society.⁴ The Committee for Relief of Native Poor of Calcutta, a sub-committee of the District Charitable Society, divided the town into divisions and defined the boundaries of each division. Visitors were appointed for each division. Ramkamal was one of the visitors of division No. 3.^{5*}

It was reported in 1838 that the visitors themselves were not conducting the enquiries in most cases. The enquiries were made mostly through their menial servants. The Central Committee strongly advocated the establishment of an asylum for the poor Indians. A committee was appointed for reporting on the practicability of constructing a general alms house. The report of the committee was placed before the Central Committee of the Society on the 31st December, 1839. It was resolved at the recommendation of the President that the proposed plan for a general alms house should be printed and circulated among the supporters of the District Charitable Society with a view to giving them an opportunity of examining the merits of the plan for the general alms house.

At a special meeting of the Central Committee held on the 30th April, 1840 the recommendation of the committee for a general alms house was considered. It was reported to the meeting that the respectable Indians met separately to consider the issue of having an alms house for Indians. An alms house was considered essential for Indian paupers. Ramkamal Sen offered a piece of land for the purpose.⁶ The special meeting decided that the only course of remedying the evil of begging in the streets was to establish a general alms house for Europeans as well as Indians. It was resolved that the Government be solicited to grant to the Society an adequate portion of ground within the limits of the town.⁷ The Government was accordingly approached. On the 14th October, 1840, the Government allowed the District Charitable Society the use of a plot of land on the Amherst Street measuring 10 beegahs and 10 cottahs for the purpose of "Poor House Relief".⁸ The plot being not sufficient to accommodate the lepers, the President waited on Lord Auckland and was successful in obtaining an additional piece of land on the Amherst Street, opposite to the ground already given to the District Charitable Society.⁹ The foundation stone of the alms house was laid on the 18th December, 1841.¹⁰

Ramkamal took interest in the Leper Asylum. It had been first established at Ballygunge.¹¹ From Ballygunge it was shifted to Bellia-ghat in 1824-25. There were altogether forty rooms. Each room was to accommodate two individuals. The rooms were erected after the "model of the best kind of native huts".¹² Ramkamal Sen and Rose were requested to report to the Central Committee whether it would be more economical to transfer from the present ground the huts to contain the lepers or to erect new huts and to sell the old ones.¹³

Ramkamal and Rose reported on the 29th November, 1841 to the Central Committee that it would be much more economical to transfer the materials of the buildings for the reconstruction of houses on the new plot to accommodate 47 lepers than to purchase new materials for the construction of houses for them. Their recommendations were accepted and they at the request of the Central Committee supervised the removal of the materials of the old huts on the new site on the Amherst Street for reconstruction of houses to accommodate lepers. The amelioration of the people of India was the common objective of the enlightened Indians and to achieve this end it would be heartening to note that in the District Charitable Society, Ramkamal Dwarkanath, Prasanna Kumar or Rustomjee Cowasjee all worked

together in close co-operation. All of them were interested to adopt modern scientific outlook to eradicate social evils.

Radhakanta Deb, the leader of the orthodox Hindus, did not associate himself with the activities of the District Charitable Society when Ramkamal, was trying hard to mobilise support for the Society from his wealthy countrymen. It could be ascertained from the proceedings of the special meeting of the District Charitable Society held on the 30th April, 1840, that a section of wealthy Indians held the view that the charity done by the Society was not a real charity. It might be that Radhakanta preferred the traditional mode of helping the poor and therefore chose to remain aloof from the activity of the Society. His indifference might be the manifestation of his conviction that what had "lasted a long time, must be right and was intended to last".¹⁴

Ramkamal's association with the District Charitable Society was very close. He tried his best to impress upon the opulent Indians that the traditional mode of helping the poor was defective. Charity, in his opinion, had to be canalised through an organised institution. Indiscriminate charity would simply increase mendacity and thereby no permanent benefit was likely to accrue to the society. He therefore stood for an alms house for Indian beggars in the town of Calcutta.

The restraining effects of the traditional society could not make him indifferent in the activities which he conceived to be rational and wise. In the District Charitable Society Ramkamal appeared to be a man with all the modern qualities. He was found to be always ready to suffer and sacrifice for the welfare and well-being of the common people in whose life and activities Ramkamal had infinite interest all through.

Reference Notes

- 1 P. C. Mittra, *Early History of the District Charitable Society*, *National Magazine*, March, 1908, pp. 85-86.
- 2 Ibid., p. 90.
3. Ibid., p. 89.
4. Fourth Report of the District Charitable Society, 1834, p. 3.
5. Ibid., p. 9.
 - * Boundaries of Division No. 3. South by Bowbazar and Boytakana Street, North by Moorghehutta & Kulotollah Street, East by Circular Road and West by the Strand.
6. Tenth Report of the District Charitable Society, 1840, p. 14.
- 7 Ibid., p. 16.
8. Ibid., p. 19.
- 9 Ibid., p. 20.
10. Eleventh Report of the District Charitable Society, 1841, p. 12.
11. First Report of the District Charitable Society, 1831, p. 28.
12. Ibid., p. 33.
13. Eleventh Report of the District Charitable Society, 1841, p. 16.
14. Anonymous, *Radhakant Deb*, *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XLV, No. XC, 1867, p. 323.

Conclusion

In 1800, practically as a pauper, Ramkamal came to Calcutta, a metropolis which was then rapidly growing into the most prosperous city of the East, to seek his fortune. He had only a little knowledge of Persian and Sanskrit and in Calcutta he picked up a rudimentary knowledge of the English language. With this stock-in-trade, he had to begin his career in Calcutta at a very early age.

He came to be acquainted with the administrative and academic elite groups of that period in the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Blacquiere, Hunter, Leyden, Roebuck, Carey, Wilson, Wallich and James Prinsep all became his close associates. His sincerity, honesty, dedication and hard exertions, both physical and mental, could secure for him the support of these eminent individuals of Calcutta. His thirst for knowledge highly impressed them. It was only through hard academic exercises that he could make up his intellectual deficiencies and when he was about 35, he came to be acknowledged on all hands as one of the eminent intellectuals of Bengal. Barring Raja Ram-mohan, no other Indian of this period was so much praised for his academic and intellectual excellence. Ramkamal should, therefore, be regarded as a fine specimen of an educated and cultured Indian whom the society of Calcutta could nurse and develop at a time when there existed practically no system of education worth the name and the English were yet to introduce any programme in India for the education of Indian youths.

Ramkamal came in close contact with a galaxy of European talents at a very early age and those Europeans were largely responsible for shaping his mental and intellectual attitudes. He resided at Collo-tola, an area of Calcutta, predominantly inhabited by the Muslims. He was in fact the product of a cosmopolitan culture and was well acquainted with the humanitarian principles of Islam and Christianity. In this context an attempt may now be made to understand Ramkamal's attitude towards the Muslims and the Christian missionaries.

The members of the Hindu aristocracy of Bengal, particularly of Calcutta, were highly influenced by the Mughal culture. Ramkamal, a member of the elite group was also equally exposed to it.

Dr. H. H. Wilson had been the mainspring of the General Committee of Public Instruction ever since its birth in 1823 till 1832. It was Ramkamal's job to assist him in his work in that department. The learned and the wealthy Hindus and Muslims who had anything to do with education during this period had to come in contact with Dr. Wilson. Since Ramkamal was his man of confidence, it was obvious that they would try to establish friendship with him. Ramkamal's association with the General Committee of Public Instruction, the Calcutta School Book Society and the Asiatic Society of Bengal afforded him an opportunity to develop friendly relation with the best elements of the Muslim community of the Presidency of Bengal. Wilson's letter from Oxford in defence of what is called orientalist phase of education was translated into Persian and distributed among the Muslims at the instance of Ramkamal Sen. Ramkamal was a Vaisnavā. Sri Chaitanya, the founder of the Vaisnava faith in Bengal, had Muslim followers. Ramkamal had the broadness of vision to accommodate Muslims in his realm of ideas. He planned to settle after retirement at Agra, a place long associated with the Muslim culture. In his attitude to Islam he had much in common with Raja Rammohan Ray. He had personal knowledge of the Muslim population of Calcutta, for, he had been appointed a visiting member of the District Charitable Society for Collotola area and his approach to their problems was always sympathetic and cordial.

About Christian missionaries, Ramkamal's attitude was quite explicit. He profusely praised Dr. William Carey, a missionary. He respectfully acknowledged the assistance of Dr. Carey for the publication of the dictionary compiled by him. In the preface to the dictionary, Ramkamal wrote that whatever had been done "towards the revival of the Bengalee language, its improvement and in fact the establishing it as a language must be attributed to that excellent man Dr. Carey...." In ascertaining the place of Dr. William Carey in the history of the Bengali language and literature, this statement of Ramkamal has profound importance. It is all the more significant that this tribute to Dr. Carey came from the pen of a contemporary eminent Bengali author who cared much for honesty and truth and who was widely known as a conservative Bengali Hindu. His affection and sympathy for those missionaries who had been working for oriental literature were amply expressed by him in his letters to Dr. H. H. Wilson. But he was very critical about the activities of some of the missionaries who were not really "pious Gentlemen". Their dishonesty was equally noticed by him.

Conversion of the people belonging to the lower castes of the Hindus to Christianity was much disliked by him. J. S. Mill also did not like to "force christianity and the teaching of the Bible on them...."¹ Ramkamal protested against this activity of the missionaries. But this aspect of missionary activities alone was not his sole criterion for judging their contributions towards the Indian society. As an enlightened patriotic Indian he assessed their activities and in his assessment both praise and condemnation were to be equally noticed.

His attitude to his own religion was quite rational. In his personal life he observed the practices of an orthodox Hindu strictly in so far as they did not clash with the broad humanitarian principles. The Hindu religion as it was practised in those days was full of superstitions. In unequivocal terms he condemned the superstitious practices of the Hindus. He could not reconcile himself with the superstitious outlook of the Hindus. He looked for a new cosmopolitan place to pass the evening of his life to devote himself to scholarly pursuits. "If I can retire from the Bank", wrote Ramkamal in 1841, "my future occupation will be writing...."² Nirad C. Chaudhuri stated that, with negligible exceptions "Indian intellectuals were reclaimed to Hinduism as soon as they became middle-aged... Most of those who had been radicals and even revolutionaries in their youth became perfectly orthodox Hindus".³

Ramkamal was an orthodox Hindu with a difference. He could not allow himself to be completely lost in religion. In that sense he was certainly an exception.

The early years of the nineteenth century witnessed a new phenomenon. The elite groups of the rulers and the ruled in Calcutta were genuinely trying to understand and appreciate each other's culture, tradition and attitudes. The air was not vitiated by suspicion and distrust. The Asiatic Society of Bengal was then busy in exploring the literary world of ancient India with a view to understanding the strength and weaknesses of the Hindu civilisation. The College of Fort William was seriously engaged in cultivating the ancient and modern languages of the sub-continent of Hindoostan. The activities of the European elite group in these institutions naturally attracted the attention of the elite group of the Hindu society. Among other reasons, it was probable that the Hindu aristocrats in their turn, as a gesture of mutual understanding, wanted to have a centre of learning for their children where Western literature and science would be the

main subjects of study. In 1824 the managers of the Hindu college wrote to the General Committee of Public Instruction that, it would "never be forgotten" that the college was "a Hindu Institution for the purpose of cultivating especially English Literature and Science alone"⁴ The establishment of the Hindu College at Calcutta might be regarded as the objective realisation of such a desire of the Hindu elite.

The Asiatic Society of Bengal, the College of Fort William and the Hindu College were the three institutions through which an effort was being consciously directed towards broadening the base of mutual understanding of Eastern and Western thoughts and in this endeavour both Europeans and Indians contributed. Among the Indians Ramkamal was the man who involved himself thoroughly in this great experiment.

But this era of co-operation and mutual understanding received a jolt when *sati* was abolished. A section of the Hindus could not appreciate the Governmental measure. In 1835 another very serious misunderstanding developed when full-fledged English education was imposed from above totally disregarding the views of the orientalist and the vernacularists. It cannot be denied that Macaulay, in spite of all his good wishes for the Indian people, made some hasty observations and wild comments in his extraordinary zeal for reformation which could not but wound the sentiments of the most rational among Indians. His contempt for values held sacred by the Indians helped to develop anti-British attitude among the younger generations in the long run.

Ramkamal like Rammohan was always for moderation. He attempted to synthesize the values of the East and the West. It is not that he was against social reforms. He was just cautious. He knew perfectly well that it was necessary to remove the stagnation of the oriental societies. But his programme was not radical. He wanted to bring about social changes by degrees and through institutions.

He had an urge for canalising social and educational activities always through institutions. He believed and possibly rightly that acculturation was possible through institutions. He did not fail to grasp the basic ideas of social change. Rammohan in particular did not directly associate himself with institutions like the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India, the Calcutta School Book Society, the Gaudiya Samaj, the Parental Academic Institution or the Hindu College, Calcutta. Ramkamal on

the other hand never failed to extend his helping hand to accelerate the activities of those useful public organisations.

The Gaudiya Samaj was to be regarded as the first association or *samaj* where the members of the elite group of the Bengali Hindu society decided the question of the language through which education of the masses would be conducted. Ramkamal Sen took the decisions of the *Samaj* with all seriousness and he actively took part in almost all the major academic establishments to realise the goal set by the community through the decisions of the *samaj*.

It became his mission in life to develop the Bengali language and literature and to spread education among the Bengali people through their own mother tongue. He suggested Urdu to be the language of instruction for northern Indians.

With the establishment of the Calcutta School Book Society and the School Society a system of education in the modern sense could be said to have begun in Bengal. At this initial stage students of the newly established schools had to begin their studies in Bengali with the help of *Neeti Cotha*, Part I, a text book composed among others by Ramkamal Sen. *Ousadsarsangraha* by Ramkamal Sen was the first publication on a scientific subject in the Bengali language and the Anglo-Bengali Dictionary compiled by him was considered by the experts of the day as the most comprehensive one. With the development of Bengali language and literature Ramkamal could establish his identity in full.

About his educational ideas it has to be said that they were thoroughly modern. He sincerely felt that Western education was necessary for India to free herself from the shackles of the age-old prejudices and deep slumber. Western education had that power to electrify and enliven the stagnant society of this country. But he felt at the same time that in a traditional society changes were to be introduced with caution and care. In his opinion, reform movement of any kind, be it in the field of education or in the domain of religion or in other areas, to succeed should be launched after considering the habits, customs, beliefs and prejudices of the people. Therefore, any new or foreign idea was to be injected as much as possible under the cover of the traditional garb so that the people could not reject it at once. In due course they would learn to appreciate the true spirit of the reform when they would receive benefit from such a change.

Ramkamal was one of the Directors of the Hindu College, an institution devoted to the spread of English education among the Indian youths. Broadly speaking he was not against English education as such though he was found to be dissatisfied with the products of this college in the later years of his life. The *Patsala* attached to the Hindu College attracted his entire attention. He desired to translate English books into Bengali for the use of the students of the vernacular schools. Bengali being the mother tongue of the people was easily intelligible to the students and for quick communication of ideas he preferred the Bengali language as the medium of study and teaching. He could not prefer English as the medium of instruction because the learning of English would take time which most of the poor students were not prepared to afford. Secondly, education would then remain confined to a particular class or a group. Thirdly, the boys, educated in English schools and cut off from the rest of the society, would form a class by themselves and would remain Indians only in blood and skin. In all other respects they would identify themselves with the ruling class. This was exactly the idea which Macaulay propounded and which Ramkamal sternly opposed.

Ramkamal wanted to communicate Western ideas through the mother tongues of the students. He believed that, if successful, this method would make a permanent impression upon the minds of the students. He wanted also that advanced books on different subjects written in English should be translated into different vernacular languages so that the old students of the vernacular schools might take advantage of these books for the enrichment of their knowledge and make themselves more useful to society.

It would be noted here that the ideas of J. S. Mill had much in common with the ideas of Ramkamal Sen. Both Macaulay and Mill subscribed to the utilitarian school of thought. Yet they had differences. Macaulay favoured English as the medium of instruction for communicating Western thoughts, whereas "Mill saw that only a few Indians would learn English well enough to grasp the complexities of Western thought; but many more persons would be affected if such thought were presented in classical and vernacular Indian languages...."⁵ To Mill communication of new ideas was all that was necessary and the question of language through which such ideas would be communicated was of no importance. *

To Ramkamal contents of the reading materials were of prime

consideration. For rapid communication of advanced ideas among a very large number of students at a cheaper cost in the shortest possible time, Ramkamal favoured vernacular schools. For mass education this was his well thoughtout programme. Ramkamal therefore could share neither the views of the anglicists nor of the orientalist. He chose to remain a conscious vernacularist ever eager to assimilate advanced Western ideas and techniques to open up new areas of knowledge to his poor countrymen.

Ramkamal Sen was neither a zamindar, nor a merchant nor even a merchant-zamindar. He, from the very beginning of his career, had been in service and worked as a salaried official till the end of his life. Landed aristocrats were said to be very close to the East India Company and the British conservatives. The traders or merchant-zamindars were stated to be the camp followers of the free-traders and the English reformers of the time. Persons who were involved neither in zamindary nor in trade were reasonably expected to analyse and judge issues more independently than the members of either of the above groups for they had no economic ties either with the monopolists or with the free-merchants. Ramkamal Sen had the privilege of judging social, educational, economic or political issues in a manner which can be called detached or dispassionate. Free from any string, his judgement, therefore, sometimes differed from the judgement of this group or that. Again, we consider his views important, for, he was possibly the lone person who could rise to become a member of the aristocracy not because of his wealth or hereditary prestige but primarily because of his position as an intellectual having wide connections. In the life time of Ramkamal Sen, no other Indian having no zamindary or substantial business interest could rise up to that level.

He opposed Radhakanta Deb on *sati* question in 1822. In 1829-30, he was found to be active in the Dharma Sabha, an association of orthodox Hindus. Government regulation abolishing *sati* was opposed by this body. In the Gaudiya Samaj, the Asiatic Society of Bengal and in the Landholders Society his close ally was Prasanna Kumar Tagore, a known associate of Raja Rammohan Ray. It is to be noted here that possibly they together formed the bridge between the two rival groups of the Bengali Hindu aristocrats of Calcutta during this period. They had much in common in their approach to the social, educational and political questions of the time. In the District Charitable Society he whole heartedly shared the views of Dwarkanath and Rustomjee Cowasjee and worked with them in close harmony

though Raja Radhakanta Deb stood aloof from its activities. In the Asiatic Society and in the Parental Academic Institution he worked with the Europeans and the Eurasians. In the Mint he worked with honour and dignity but when attempts were made to dishonour him by Curnin, an important European official, he sharply reacted to protect his honour. Curnin was brought back to his senses by the Court of Directors. Similarly in the Bank of Bengal, George Udny tried to undermine his position in that organisation. But that powerful officer could not succeed in materialising his designs and Ramkamal came out of that institution with honour, leaving his eldest son Harimohan to succeed him. His courage was remarkable.

Therefore, his association or dissociation with the dominant groups or important individuals of that period demonstrates that he was no respecter of groups or persons. He would fearlessly fight for what he conceived to be rational and wise and in doing so he would certainly not take into consideration whether his decision or activity on a particular issue would bring him credit or discredit. For instance, his stand on *sati* in 1829-30 goes directly against the stand he took on the same subject in 1822. In 1822, he was much praised by the missionaries for his enlightened views but at the same time he earned hostility of the conservative Hindus. The reaction of the society was just the reverse in 1829-30. It should be noted that one of the characteristics of an honest intellectual would be to accept fame or disgrace, honour or dishonour for his independent views with equanimity and poise. Since he stood for rationality, he was to be guided by the dictates of his reasons and wisdom rather than by vox populi. This aspect of Ramkamal's character definitely bears the stamp of Western intellectual culture.

This is, however, not to suggest that he always judged or understood each and every issue correctly. His association with the Dharma Sabha had been the subject of bitter criticism. It is true that Ramkamal Sen failed to grasp the very inner spirit of the Governmental measure. A very narrow sense of nationalism which was whipped up by the Dharma Sabha fitted well within the frame work of a superstitious traditional Hindu society. Ramkamal became an unfortunate victim of the situation. The question of abolition of Sati was a pure question of humanity. Ramkamal was confused and on strict scrutiny it appears that he had committed an error. His last will and testament possibly reflects his deep sense of atonement. It shows also his unbounded affection for the helpless women of the Hindu society. Ramkamal undoubtedly oscillated on *sati* question

and this oscillation was to be found in almost every eminent character of the period either on this issue or on that. It had been said that in the nineteenth century there was a conflict "between two fairly equal sets of abstract intellectual ideas battling in the minds of man, west-oriented liberalism and tradition-oriented conservatism, a conflict not always between two distinct groups of men but often within the same person swaying to and fro..."⁶ The statement appears to be quite convincing. Even the eminent individuals could not always act or react on social questions of the period according to the dictates of reasons alone. Moreover human weaknesses have a role to play even in the characters of intellectuals.

The idea of making a regulation for banning *sati* was repugnant to the idea of both Raja Rammohan and Dr. H. H. Wilson. This unity, on the one hand, and a narrow sense of nationalism whipped up by the orthodox Hindus, on the other, prepared the ground for confusion. It has to be admitted that nobody in the Hindu society, not even Raja Rammohan, could appreciate the policy of direct Governmental interference in the matter of *sati*. Ramkamal was confused. Raja Rammohan had also confusion in him and that might also be the reason why he could not advise the Governor General to make necessary regulation to stop *sati*.

If Ramkamal's views on *sati* as expressed by him before a public meeting in 1822 are taken into consideration, it cannot be denied that basically he was against the custom of *sati*. His views and the views of Rammohan were identical though Rammohan was much vocal and more ardent. Both of them disfavoured direct Governmental interference in the matter. When it became certain that the Government was determined to stop the custom with the assistance of a regulation, Ramkamal decided to oppose the Government through the Dharma Sabha and he remained active in that body till the petition of the Sabha opposing the regulation was sent to England.

Though Rammohan disfavoured direct Governmental intervention, he did nothing effectively to oppose the Government. When the regulation was passed he changed his position and came forward to hail the action of the Government. This attitude of Raja Rammohan is a bit difficult to justify rationally. Since he hailed the regulation, he ought to have advised the Governor General to pass the same. He, however, did not do that and by not doing so, he proved himself inconsistent. He was certainly confused at a very significant historical moment.

It would, therefore, be seen that both Ramkamal and Rammohan, who rationally accepted the best principles of Western liberalism, failed to stick to them consistently. Oscillation was evident in both these great men of the age.

Though ambivalence was quite apparent in Ramkamal yet we should not miss the point also that he made an attempt to rectify his stand on *Sati* question afterwards. A Dictionary in English and Bengalee was by far the most brilliant literary production of Ramkamal Sen. He dedicated it to Lord Bentinck with the remarks that the measures Bentinck had "adopted to secure justice" to the people of India and the "regulations" he "made to raise them in moral scale" were very much gratifying to him. He was convinced that Bentinck's administration of five years had "effected more real good" to Indians than what they had "experienced under any previous Ruler".

He did not specify which of the regulations were beneficial to Indian people. Literally, he meant all the regulations made by Bentinck including the one which banned *Sati*. *Sati* was banned in 1829 and Ramkamal dedicated the Dictionary in 1834. In between, long five years had rolled by, the dust raised over the *Sati* controversy had settled down and he had time enough for introspection. By then he was collected and composed. Rationally he became convinced of the correctness of the steps taken by the Government to abolish *Sati*. As a sober realist, he wanted to make amends.

The only rational course he found to correct his stand was to dedicate the book to that person, Lord William Bentinck, who was identified with the abolition of *Sati*. This action of Ramkamal Sen had to a great measure corrected his record and elevated his character.

One may still question : What was the use of confession when the damage had already been done ? It is true that the gravity of a sin or a crime or a mistake can neither be enhanced nor lessened by a mere confession. Yet the confession is meaningful.

In this case, to Ramkamal at least, it was a great relief, for, he got the most appropriate channel to vindicate his rational self. To us, he appears to be a man of exceptional character, a fearless honest intellectual who straightaway admitted his wrong, the moment he conceived it to be so. Was there any trace of such a quality in any eminent character of the age ? On all other major questions the views of Ramkamal were the same as those of the close associates of Raja Rammohan Ray.

His attitude to industrial workers is a subject which attracts our attention. It was during his tenure in the Mint that efforts were for the first time made to secure pensionary benefits for the ill-paid Indian workers. Though the Government of the time did not give any pecuniary assistance to the workers, yet this effort produced some results in the sense that the Government directed the authorities of the Mint to provide employment to the relatives of the retiring workers. When ruthless exploitation was the order of the day, this was certainly not a mean achievement. It should be noted here also that Calcutta Mint was to be regarded as the best specimen of an industrial establishment organised on scientific basis. Its workers were genuine industrial workers. Ramkamal did what he could as the head of the Indian establishment for them.

About peasants it could be said that he was not unconcerned about their woes. The introduction of the permanent settlement and the destruction of traditional Indian industries brought immeasurable suffering to the peasantry. Ramkamal was quite aware of these facts. His reactions had been clearly expressed in his letters to Dr. H. H. Wilson. He believed that the zamindari system was bad and he himself did not invest in zamindari. He was in favour of giving the peasants employment during lean season and leisure hours. He understood that sources of subsidiary income should be opened to the peasantry to save them from utter economic distress. In a subtle way he advocated this principle in his article on jute. His association with the Agricultural Horticultural Society of India from its foundation to the very last day of his life shows his keen interest in the development of agriculture which alone could extend some economic benefits to the peasantry.

His attitude to the hut-dwellers and the city poor was clear. His sympathy was amply and explicitly expressed in his statements before the Municipal Committee. His activities in the District Charitable Society would also reflect his deep concern for the welfare of his poor countrymen.

In his assessment of political developments of the period, by and large, he appeared to be the forerunner of liberal politicians. But in the last years of his life, he seemed to have lost faith in the politics of petitions and eventually expressed his ideas in a radical tone. His faith in the British liberal outlook was shaken by the activities of the Company's Government in India and he was driven somewhat to the

position of a political radical. Many Indian leaders were to be found who were wedded to liberalism at first but experience taught them to give up their former views and in later years they became the exponents of radical ideas in sheer disgust and anguish.

It cannot be denied that the ideas of a great man can be kept alive through the ages only by the concerted efforts of an organised institution backed by the wealthy community of a society. The Brahma Samaj, essentially a religious body, stood for the ideals of Raja Rammohan Ray and it was the main work of the Samaj to popularise the ideas and activities of that great reformer. The very name of Brahma Samaj has been closely linked with the history of Bengal renaissance. Rammohan's eminent biographers, both Indian and foreign, took care to highlight the important events of his life which naturally caught the imagination of the English-educated middle class. Tagore, for example, chose to call him 'Bharat Pathik'. To the educated middle class, Raja Rammohan stood for everything that could be called modern or progressive. The eminent authors of modern Indian history also contributed to make Rammohan popular. This they did certainly for valid reasons.

In the case of Ramkamal we do not find any such institution like the Brahma Samaj to make his ideas popular. P. C. Mittra wrote a very small booklet on him and no other author worth the name wrote much on Ramkamal. The historians too remained almost silent about this man while discussing nineteenth century history of Bengal. They, however, took up mainly two issues i.e. *sati* and Derozio episode, to assess his place in the nineteenth century social history of Bengal. To Prof. S. C. Sarkar "Radhakanta was no out and out reactionary" and Ramkamal Sen was "like Radhakanta Deb...."⁸ Therefore in his assessment Ramkamal remains a reactionary. Books on Rammohan or Vidyasagar can be found in plenty but books on the so-called reactionaries are either rare or are not available at all. It is obvious that historians should be more interested in personalities, who in their opinion contributed more towards social progress. Unfortunately, however, very little attention had been given by them to persons who were equally good modernizers but dubbed as reactionaries by some eminent authors. One would notice painfully that the students of history feel very little enthusiasm to undertake researches on them. The result of this attitude is that we cannot have before us a total picture of the important personalities of the period belonging to different social groups to arrive at a balanced judgment and we are left with

no other alternative but to be satisfied with a partial view of the society of a period considered to be the most vital in our national history.

Ramkamal mixed with the Europeans on equal terms as did Rammohan and Dwarkanath. He was consulted by the Indians and Europeans alike. Lord William Bentinck had occasions to consult him.⁹ He was, according to Dr. H. H. Wilson, "uniformly and consistently intelligent, indefatigable, upright and calm"¹⁰ and he was never found to be "discomposed or angry."¹¹ Pearychand Mittra wrote that he was a man of "unblemished character".¹²

Ramkamal never acted as a dignified cipher in any organisation or institution with which he was connected. He took lively interest in the activities of those public bodies. He happened to be a man of varied interest. He took as much interest in building up of the museum and the library as in the development of agriculture and gardening. He had interest in classical language and literature. He had in his library a good number of Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit books.¹³ Dr. Wilson wanted to collect historical materials on Bengali families which became rich and eminent during the early British period. Ramkamal was helping him in his endeavour.¹⁴ He could find time in spite of his heavy engagements to write books and articles. He had interest in the theatre also. On important social questions he did not remain a silent spectator. His affection for the city of Calcutta and its people was great. He desired much to improve the civic amenities of Calcutta. His views on political and economic developments in India are of absorbing interest till today. In every walk of life, educational, social, economic or political he left his contribution in his own way. But he "never made a parade of his public spirit and rather shrank from than courted notice",¹⁵ wrote Dr. Wilson.

Wilson writes that Ramkamal was "somewhat less popular than several of his more ardent and ambitious associates...."¹⁶ This was because, in matters relating to reforms of any kind, "he was not in a hurry, he did not wish to precipitate changes, but to let them develop themselves gradually and safely".¹⁷ In fact, "without putting himself obtrusively forward as a reformer, without sacrificing his character and credit by denouncing or deserting the practices of his forefathers in different things"¹⁸ Ramkamal Sen, a neglected personality in our social history, pursued the great objects of his life—"the good of his country and the elevation of his countrymen...."¹⁹ patiently and for decades. He strove to realise those objects with no less sincerity and devotion than our great reformer Raja Rammohan Ray.

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Appendix I

The Last Will and Testament of Romkamal Sen

Sri Horee

To the most noble Srijoot John Cowie Sahaib, Agent and Merchant, of Calcutta, Srijookto Baboo Muteeloll Seal, Merchant of Calcutta, Srijoot Saumchand Mojoomdar, inhabitant of Colootolah in Calcutta, and Srijoot Taurachand Mojoomdar, inhabitant of Colootolah in Calcutta.

1st Item. I Sri Ramcomole Sain Goopto, inhabitant of Calcutta at Fort William in Bengal endite this Instrument of Will, purporting as follows :

I hereby appoint you my Authorities or Executors or Administrators. After I am dead, my wealth, that is, my Company's papers, bills, chittahs or money, ready money, homesteads, lands, immovables and moveables, whatever property shall remain, you will agreeably to the directions hereinafter written protect the same, make settlements thereof and give in alms, gifts and donations. I make you the guardians, *woopodista* or.....(torn), *prethepaulock* of my sons, who are under age.

2nd Item. I appoint my wife and my four sons, Sri Horeemohun Sain, Sri Peareymohun Sain, Sri Bungseedhur Sain and Sri Mooroley-dhar Sain, *sabaeets* of Sri Sri Issore Greedharee Selah Thakoor, worshipped by me. I give in the name of the said Issore Thakoor 12500 twelve thousand and five hundred Rupees in ready money, and the new homestead, tank, *boituckkhonnah* battee or homestead and garden in Goreefah ; and the Meerbaug or garden, (torn) Joomin Shah's *battee* or homestead, the paddy land, the Choitan (torn) *bagaun* or garden, the homestead that once appertained to Kannie Baugdee and so forth, whatsoever there are, the whole of those. You will perform the Issore Thakoor's *shaibah* and my father's and mother's *shrauddo* and the acts for my religious merit out of the interest thereof and the produce of the lands etcetera. None of the whole of this property shall be divided into shares or sold, but remain *saudharun* or in common among the *sebaeets*, whosoever shall reside in the homestead at Gurreefah, he will possess and enjoy and perform the service of the Issore Thakoor and do the said acts ; and out of the said produce and

interest, the repairs of the homesteads, the *chowkeydarry* and the protection of the property shall be accomplished and he will render an account of the incomings and expenditures.

3rd Item. *Daun* or donation of ready money. I hereby give to Sri Horeemohun Sain 40,000 forty thousand Rupees ; I hereby give to Sri Peareymohun Sain 40,000 forty thousand Rupees ; I hereby give to Sri Bungseedhar Sain 40,000 forty thousand Rupees ; I hereby give to Sri Mooroleydhar Sain 40,000 forty thousand Rupees. I hereby give to Srimotee Binda Daibey, my youngest daughter, 5000 five thousand Rupees.

4th Item. You will give to my eldest daughter, Srimotee Nittromoney Daibey, at the rate of 10 ten Rupees per month, 120 one hundred and twenty Rupees annually, as long as she is alive ; for this purpose you will give my sons 3,000 three thousand Rupees Company's paper. After the death of my daughter, my sons will divide the principal money into equal shares and take. Nittromoney will receive the interest only during her life time.

5th Item. I hereby give to Srimotee Bissassoree Daibey, my brother's *stree* or wife, 1500 one thousand five hundred Rupees ; the interest of which she will receive during her life time and in like manner, to Srimotee Juggodombah Daibey, my youngest brother's *stree* or wife, 1000 one thousand Rupees ; the interest of which she will receive. After her death, my sons will get the principal money.

6th Item. I hereby give to Srimotee Koroonomohee Daibey, the *stree* or widow of my brother the late Ramdhone Sain, 1500 one thousand five hundred Rupees ; the interest of which, she will receive during her life time. After her death, her sons will get the principal money.

7th Item. I hereby give to my eldest sister 1000 one thousand Rupees ; the interest of which, she will receive during her life time. After her death, her sons will expend the said money for the acts of her religious merit or divide and take the same.

8th Item. I hereby give to the *bramonee* of Sri Pittambur Torkahponchanon 500 five hundred Rupees.

9th Item. I hereby give to Srimotee Gourmoney Daibey, my brother's daughter, 500 five hundred Rupees.

10th Item. I hereby give to the five daughters of my eldest brother, the late Madanmohan Sain, at the rate (torn) one hundred Rupees, five hundred Rupees.

11th Item. I hereby give to the Issore Sri Greedharee Thakoor, my books in the Sanscrit and the common dialect. My sons, His *sebaeets*, will become the *odhokioh* thereof. These books shall not be sold nor divided into shares.

12th Item. I hereby give my English books to Sri Bungseedhur Sain and Sri Morroleydhur Sain.

13th Item. I hereby give my Persian and Arabic books to Sri Horeemohun Sain.

14th Item. I hereby give to my *stree* or wife my *shawls*, *roomauls*, gold and silver ornaments, metallick vasses and the *loujima* or necessities and requisits of the family, the whole of the articles.

15th Item. *Daun* or donation of the fixed property situate in Calcutta and its vicinity.

I hereby give to Sri Horeemohun Sain and Sri Peareymohun Sain, to these two persons, the dwelling *bassah batte*, the *garree Khaunah* or carriage house in the front of that *battee*, the land in Nimtollah, the homestead no. 8 and the homestead no. 6 in Birjee Tullou, together with the tank and garden. Becoming unanimous, Sri Horeemohun Sain will divide and take the south side of the *bassah battee*, and Sri Peareymohun Sain the north side thereof in equal shares. The two homesteads in Birjee Tullou, the land in Nimtollah and the *garree khaunah* or carriage house, they will also divide and take in equal shares.

I hereby give to Sri Bungseedhur Sain and Sri Mooroleydur Sain, these two persons, the homestead no. 5 in Birjee Tullou, the garden in Mirzapoor, that once appertained to Gobindo Bosoo, the homestead in Potoldangah, together with the land of the Mondole ; which they will divide and take in equal shares. I hereby give to Srimotee Binda Daibey the 5 five cottahs of *bharateah* land in Loll Bazar.

16th Item. Exclusive of the property aforementioned, the garden at Mooroleah together with the homestead, the land in Mirzapoor, the land in Gungadhur Baboo's Lane in the Bow Bazar, the paddy land, the land on the bank of the Ganges, the homestead that appertained to the Coloo and the other property remain in common for the purposes of the taxes and land rent, the repairs of the homesteads in Calcutta, for the *chowkeydarry*, and for the.....(torn) for realizing the rents etcetera. During the life time of my wife or as long as the family remain together, so long, they will remain under the control of my sons, Sri Horeemohun Sain and Sri Peareymohun Sain. Afterwards, amicably, or by auction, having sold, my sons will divide and take in equal shares.

17 Item. As long as my wife remains alive, or as long as the family remain joint in food in the same homestead and together or as long as my infant sons do not attain their majorities, or up to the Bengalley year 1260 twelve hundred and sixty or the period of...(torn) years, the property that I have...(torn) under the items second, fifteenth and sixteenth consisting of real property etcetera, the superintendency and collection of the rents thereof shall be under the control of my wife. Out of all the produce therefrom, she will defray the expenses for the food of the family, the *shaibah* or service of the Issore Thakoor, the daily and periodical acts, and the expenses for the wedding of Sri Bungseedhur Sain, Sri Mooroleydhur Sain, and of my *pouttros* or grandsons, Sri Jadoonauth Sain and Sri Nobinchondro Sain. Afterwards the property, that I have written in the names of the different persons, they will respectively possess and enjoy the same fully.

18th Item. In the third item, the money that I have written in the name of Sri Bungseedhur Sain and Sri Mooroleydhur Sain, the interest thereof having accumulated upto the time of their majorities, with that money, you will prepare and give them their dwelling homestead.

19th Item. I give 30 thirty rupees per month for keeping of the accounts of my Estate and for the collection of the rents of the property in common. My sons will according to their turns, effectuate the business one year each.

20th Item. After paying the aforementioned legacies, if any money remains as balance, in that event, my four sons will get the same in equal shares.

21st Item. You will expend for my *shraud* 4000 four thousand Rupees in the whole.

22nd Item. You will consider this Will as the last. Whatever I have declared prior to this, the same is void. Hereafter, if I make any alteration of any part of this or reverse the same or make any other settlement, in that case, I will draw up a *crore-Pottro* or codicil to this will and get the same witnessed and delivered ; in which case, you will consider it as *munzoor* or sanctioned only.

Calcutta...(torn) 51, 26th *Joistee*, English 1844, 7th June.

Sri Ramcomole Sain

(Seal).

Witnesses :—

Signed, sealed, delivered

in the presence of :

Sri Soroopchand Doss, inhabitant of Colootolah.

Sri Ramchand Doss, inht. of Colootolah.

Sri Ramchand Sircar, inht. of Jaunnagore.

THE CODICIL TO RAMKAMAL'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

Sri Horec

Author of Prosperity.

Sri Ramcomole Sain
Ramcomole Sen
(Seal).

I, Sri Ramcomole Sain Goopta endite this codicil that is *crore-pottro will* purporting as follows :—

Agreeably to the 22nd twenty second item of my Last Will, I write this *crore will pottro* or supplementary Instrument of Will.

I have given to my *stree* or wife Srimotee Chondromoney Daiby one lac and sixty thousand 1,60,000 Rupees ; a Trust Deed for that I have given to be written but owing to the said paper not being ready up to this day, I write this direction and *hundobast* or settlement. That I have hereby appointed Sri John Cowie Sahaib and my sons Sri Horeemohun Sain and Sri Peareymohun Sain, Trustees of the said money. Purchasing Company's paper, Bank share, or talook with the said money, you will keep the same in the name of...(torn) Chondromoney. The interest or produce thereof, you will give to Chondromoney Daibey during her life time. After her death my four sons Sri Horeemohun Sain and Sri Peareymohun Sain and Sri Bungseedhur Sain and Sri Moorolecydhur Sain, 4 persons, will get in...(torn) shares. If my wife...(torn) before my infant sons attain their ages, in that case this money will be divided after the expiration of 15 fifteen years from this day's date. Within this interval, you will in no way expend this money, nor lend out, nor employ in any other way. If any son dies, before he has attained his age, and if he has no wife or issue, in that case, the surviving sons will get : if son...(torn) not born, but there be a *stree* or wife, in that case, you will give to such widow daughter-in-law 5000 five thousand Rupees only. Calcutta, 10th tenth June, 1844 eighteen hundred and forty four, Bengalley 29th twenty-ninth *Joistee*, 1251 year twelve hundred and fifty one.

Witnesses :—

Signed, sealed, delivered

in the presence of :

Sri Gungahnarion Ghose, inht. of Reserah.

Madhub Chunder Sen
Ramchand Doss.

APPENDIX II

Inventory

Ramkamal Sen (died on the 3d. August, 1844)

An inventory of the estate effects and property of Ramcomul Sen deceased which since his death came to the hands, possession or knowledge of Muttyloll Seal and Tarrachund Mazoomdar two of the executors named in the Last Will and Testament of the said deceased.

Real Estate

A house in Colootollah called the family residence.
Ground in the same place called the coach house.
Ditto called Nimtollah Ground.
Ditto in Arpooly.
Ditto in Bow Bazar.
Ditto in Loll Bazar.
Ditto in Juggernaut Ghaut.

A house in Puttuldangah.
A ditto in Mission Row No. 5.
A ditto " " 6
A ditto " " 7/1.
A garden with a house and two tanks in Oolltadingee.
A piece of paddy land in Duckhundaree.
A garden with a house and tank in Mirzapore.
A piece of ground in Gurpar.
A Talook called Meerbaug in Gurreepha,
A house in Gurreepha.

Personal Estate.

Government securities and cash to the amount of Company's Rupees 4,04,167-9-9.

Given under our hands dated this 29th day of November, 1847.

Mutty Loll Seal
Tarrachund Mazoomdar
Executors of the said
Ramcomul Sen deceased.

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